

FORTY TWO
SERMONS
ON THE
Most Important Concerns
OF A
CHRISTIAN LIFE.

By the late Rev. *ELISHA SMITH*, M. A.
Vicar of *Tidd St. Giles* in the *Isle of Ely*, and
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of *Deism*.

THE SECOND VOLUME.

On Select Portions of the Epistles and Gospels from
Septuagesima to *Trinity Sunday*.

To which is added,
The Duty of keeping the Festivals of our Church,
A SERMON for *May Day*.

L O N D O N:

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FOR THE TWO
SERMONS

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Most Important Concerns

OF A

CHRISTIAN LIFE

By the Rev. WILLIAM SMITH, M.A.
Vicar of St. Giles in the Field, London
Author of "The Christian's Duty"
&c.



On the Portion of the Bible and Gospel
containing the Parable of the Sower.

To which is added
The Duty of keeping the Festivals of our Church
A SERMON by the Rev.

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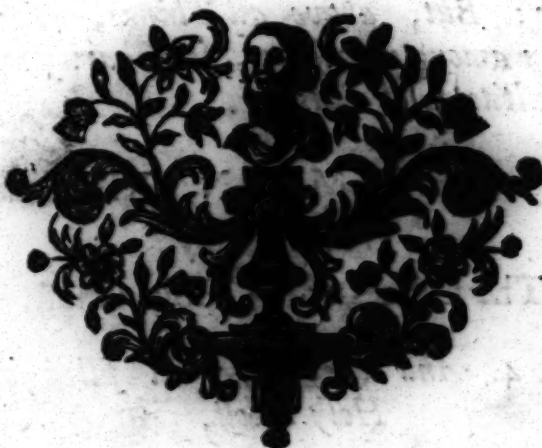
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S E R M O N

The First.

*The true Notion, Rule, and Measure
of Temperance.*

The first Sermon on 1 COR. ix. 25. which is
Part of the Epistle of the Day.

*Every Man that striveth for the Mastery is tem-
perate in all Things.*

TH E Mastery here alluded to by our
eloquent Apostle, is that which was
well known, and much contended for
by those *Corinthians* to whom he
writ his two Epistles; for they greatly celebrated
those renowned *Isthmian* Exercises or Games, which
consisted in Running, Wrestling, and Cuffing.
So high was the Value, and so great the Strife for
the Glory to be won in those Prizes, that it drew
B Spectators

Spectators and Competitors from almost all Parts of the World, which justifies St. *Paul* in making so many Comparisons as he does in his Writings, in reference to the Christian Course and Warfare, and Wrestling, &c. most proper and apposite in those Days, because so universally understood : Particularly the *Corinthians*, in whose Country these famous Achievements were to be seen, could not but be well acquainted with the Rules and Conditions of those Exercises, and the Preparation necessary for any that put in for the Prize, which was a strict Discipline, Abstinence from many Things, a set Diet, both as to Quantity and Quality of Meat, and a very careful and watchful Denial of every Gratification that might be any Hindrance in their way to that corruptible Crown which they all set their Heart on, but which was given only to that one happy Person who shou'd gain the Mastery in the Contest : Therefore, says the Apostle with great Address, when he begins his Metaphor, *Know ye not ?* None who knew better than the *Corinthians*. And here in my Text he follows up the Discipline, and with a convincing Connexion urges on their Care in the far greater Reasonableness of exercising Abstinence and Temperance in the Things belonging to their Christian Course, from the Consideration of an incorruptible immortal Crown, the sure Prize of all sincere Labourers after it. If they could in earnest think it worth while to be so abstemious and temperate in all Things, in hopes of a puny corruptible Crown, a few fading Flowers and Leaves, which they were not certain of obtaining, after the utmost Exactness of Preparation neither ; and which but one cou'd enjoy, and all the rest must lose their Pains and Labour : How much wiser and more reasonable wou'd it be in them to employ that Temperance towards

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towards procuring an incorruptible Coronation in the Heavens, infinitely, and beyond all Compare more valuable in the Possession, more easy to be obtain'd by Pursuit, more certain to be given, not to one individual Conqueror, but to every overcoming Soul that strives for the Mastery as he ought to strive, in proportion as this invaluable Crown of Bliss and Immortality deserves to excite him ?

I shall not pursue the Motive here laid down from the Comparison of the Rewards and Crowns proposed, but speak of the Means and Methods specified for the Christian's winning that which he aspires after, by gaining the Mastery and Conquest over that Adversary he has to cope with, which is set down, after my Text, to be *the Body*, which we have both the Advice and Example of our Apostle to use our best Endeavours to buffet and subdue, beat down and keep under, and that for this momentous Reason, *Verse 27.* lest, for want of due Care, it shou'd prevail, and get the Dominion, and we, with our imperfect, fruitless Virtue, become *Castaways* at last. We had need constantly to look about and see our Danger ; when a *St. Paul*, with his high Attainments and Privileges of Grace, added to his Progress in Piety, was in so much Apprehension from this Enemy in his Christian Olympicks, that it engaged him in constant Watchfulness of Discipline (as he confesses.) What Degree of Vigilance, Resolution, and Abstinence ought it to awake in us, to subdue that Enemy of our Spiritual and Celestial Joys, with which we generally live in fast Friendship. So far are we from suspecting any Danger from that Quarter, that we caress and pleasure it as a most dear and bosom Friend ; it is so close and intimate, and accounted by the Eyes of Flesh so much ourselves, that to deny it any thing is to

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deny

deny *ourselves*, which not many have the Faith or Manhood to do ; tho', in truth, the most subverting Enemy we have to encounter in this State of Trial, is that of our own Household, the Flesh and Body of Sin and Concupiscence, with which we are born, and which is the last that is brought into perfect Obedience. From the Treachery of this alone proceeds all the Advantage or Injury that any other Enemy can prosecute against our Souls ; for neither the Devil nor the World cou'd seduce us but by Baits first made agreeable to this first Deceiver : This is the *Law in our Members that warreth against the Law of our Mind*, and entices us so powerfully, even against our Consent, to do those unjustifiable Things we otherwise wou'd not. The *Sin that easily besets us*, and overcomes our Reason, proceeds from this Principle of Sense : All that miserable Delusion, or Forgetfulness, that has seiz'd so many almost whole Parishes of Christians, in placing their Affections and greatest Cares on Things of sensual Enjoyment of this present World, with a Negligence of the supreme Concern for the higher Happiness they were born to ; all that Distraction and Deadness in the Discharge of sacred Duty, proceeds from the unmortified Desires and Affections of this Part of us ; for which reason are we call'd upon so continually in Scripture to have a strict Eye upon this Enemy : To *mortify these Deeds of the Body, the Members that are upon the Earth, and crucify the old Man, the Flesh, with its Affections and Lusts* ; with innumerable other Cautions to the same Effect : And all for this general, irrefragable Reason, in respect to the other World, that they who do not, are in frequent Passages, and most positive plain Words, excluded for ever from the Kingdom of Heaven. That the Life of a
Christian

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Christian can qualify him for that blessed Place, must necessarily proceed from a contrary ruling Principle of the Spirit. *If ye live according to the Flesh*, says the Holy Spirit by the Apostle, *ye shall die*; but *if thro' the Spirit ye mortify the Deeds of the Body ye shall live*; and the Divine Wisdom does also throw in many other Motives and Inducements in respect to this Life, to encourage us the more to it; that it is not only necessary and wise, in regard to the future, but likewise for the present and greater Enjoyment of our Being. It shews us the Way and Means to Bliss, and what Assistance to call in; namely, besides our own Reason and Fortitude of Mind, the Almighty Grace of God, which, with our own Concurrence, is able to do all Things, and make us more than Conquerors over the strongest Opposition that can encounter our Virtue and Happiness; and it lays down many Admonitions how to escape the Pollutions of the World thro' Lust; to prevent the Destruction both of Body and Soul, which they wou'd bring unto.

But before we enter upon these Reflections, to treat the more usefully on these Words, it will be convenient

- I. To shew wherein Temperance properly consists, and what is its true Rule and Measure.
- II. Expose the great Folly and mischievous Effects of Intemperance, in respect both to this World and the next. And in the
- III^d and last Place, by way of Prevention, I wou'd suggest a few Rules to your Remembrance, the better to avoid it for the Time to come.

And, I. To shew wherein Temperance properly consists. Perhaps there is not in all the inspired Writings, or other Volumes in the World,

in the Compass of so few Words, a fuller, more adequate Rule, and perfect Measure for Temperance, than this of my Text; for it lays down the only true End that ought to govern and direct it, which of itself best decides all Cases of Doubt emerging; and that is, in order to *gain the Mastery*, we are commanded to be *temperate in all Things*. Not that we are to extirpate our Appetites, and with rigid Austerity deny the Inclinations of our Nature; but to bring them under Regulation, restrain them to proper Objects that are allow'd by Religion, in the due Measures and proper Seasons prescribed by Reason. For those Desires and Inclinations are planted in us for most wise Purposes, and are no way prejudicial to our Welfare, either here or hereafter, but by our own Irregularity and Misusage. We are not tied down to the meer Necessities of Nature, to take worldly Care for nothing but to keep Body and Soul together; nor are we commanded to macerate ourselves by a voluntary Poverty, or other unnecessary Stipulations. This would make Religion a Burthen, which in its own Nature is the greatest Comfort in this World; and defeat its own End. Moreover, the Extream in the Defect may disable the scrupulous Man from doing Good to his Brother, and serving God chearfully, as much as the Excess or Abuse the other way. By all the rigorous Usage that is, one can't be brought absolutely to hate his own Flesh; it would be unnatural to attempt it, as it is impossible for the God of Nature to require it. All the Creatures of God are given us for our Use, and they are good, (as he acquaints us) if used with Thanksgiving: Whether we eat or drink, our perpetual Caution is to do it to the Glory of God; and that is done, when we feast sometimes in Friendship with one another,

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another, and innocently, at proper Seasons, exhilarate ourselves with Chearfulness in drinking moderately what was made and appointed to glad the Heart of Man. *Drink no longer Water*, says our Apostle to *Timothy*, *but use a little Wine for thy Stomach's sake, and thine often Infirmities.* 1 Tim. v. 23. He prescribes little, that none might have Pretence for Excess who read this Epistle. Thus *Solomon*, *Prov. xxxi. 6.* calls in for *Wine*, to be given to those who are heavy-hearted. We are permitted a free Licence in all the innocent Enjoyments of Life, which no way interfere with, or obstruct the great Concernment of Religion. *That everyone* (says the wise Man, *Eccl. v. 18.*) *to whom God has given Riches, should eat and drink, and enjoy the Good of his Labour; this is the Gift of God.* All that we are enjoin'd, and engage ourselves to, is to keep the Body in Subjection to the Soul, and so far to master its Sollicitations, and keep its Passions and Appetites in Subordination, as not to follow, nor be led by them; to mortify and reduce its evil and corrupt Affections, so far as not to hinder us from daily proceeding in all Virtue and Godliness of Living: This is the End of that Abstinence from sensual Pleasure, which is commanded us here in the Rule of *being temperate in all Things*; and whatever Measure and Degree of Abstinence answers this End, either in Meat or Drink, in Apparel, or Sleep, or Diversion, is that which is required.

The first Collect in *Lent* prays God to
“ give us Grace to use such Abstinence, that
“ our Flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we
“ may ever obey Godly Motions in Righteousness and true Holiness.” And that is the true and proper Temperance enforced by the Gospel. As much as renders the Body both governable and chearful in religious Duties, renders

ders it serviceable to the Soul, retrieving it from Captivity, and from all Subjection to Sense, and that inferior Part, which ought in all the Actions of a Man to be under the Regimen of its Superior, the Soul; so that to live the Life of Faith, and not the Life of Sense, in the midst of sensible Objects, is that Temperance, and that Moderation prescrib'd unto us.

The Fast of *Lent* is a very ancient, and most pious Institution, recommended to all Christians for the attaining that Mastery over our bodily Appetites and Desires, which the Law of the Spirit of Life in *Christ Jesus* requires us to be perfect in, that we may chasten our Souls with Abstinence on this anniversary Season; an Abstinence that is purely religious, and indeed holy; for the regaining and strengthening the Empire of the Soul over sensual Enjoyments, regulating the Use and Fruition of them, according to the Laws of Reason and Grace; to the End that the Soul may be more free and disengaged to mind its own eternal Concerns, in Recollection of all its Sins, Trespases, and deep Contrition and Humiliation for them; and all the Acts of holy Meditation and Devotion. And as these may be further'd and promoted by a slender Diet, feeding sparingly, denying our Appetites their full Satisfaction at usual Meals, it is particularly to be observed, that unless these religious Ends accompany, neither a total, nor a partial Fast, is any Act of Religion at all. A meer bodily Fast, or a Change of Diet, which is very often among *Roman* Catholicks, but a Change and Discontinuance of one Dainty for another, if not attended with an inward Grace and spiritual Improvement, is a prophane Mockery of God, and profiteth nothing. If the Mind is not more rais'd and purify'd
from

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from Sin and Sense, we have no Reason to value ourselves, upon a stricter Discipline, over other People, lest we be like the *Pharisees*, who despised others by reason of their many Fasts. But then whatever Indulgence and undue Gratification tends to pamper the Body, and foment its Empire, and carry off our chief Affection and Care, (which shou'd be plac'd on nothing but the momentous Things of Religion, and a Life to come) to the sole Accomplishment of those transitory Sensations; and whatever makes the Mind most solicitous for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof: This is most pernicious to the Soul, and the fatallest Enemy that wars against her, and is therefore that Intemperance, which is so unlawful, and so strictly prohibited by God, and concerning which so many Cautions are given us, that we be not deceiv'd thereby. For so exceedingly prone are we to be deceiv'd, and follow the natural Biass to sensual Pleasure, which original Corruption has thrown into our very Composition, that we must infallibly perish, if we don't take very watchful Heed to ourselves. As every one therefore knows their own weakest Part, which is aptest to yield to Temptation, and by what they are usually drawn under the Power of their favourite Sin or Sins; they must constitute an incessant Watch and Guard upon that, and bend all the Vigilance and Force of their Mind to defend themselves against it; for one Sin that reigns in Possession lets in a Legion more, and whoever indulges in one forbidden Instance, tho' temperate and regular in all others, is *guilty of the whole*; so that if you are not temperate in all, you are temperate in none to any Purpose.

But, 2dly, it may be observ'd as to the Quantity or Quality which makes the Excess, that no uniform Measure can be stated. These must necessarily

cessarily vary, according to the Strength or Weakness of different Persons of different Capacities ; that which wou'd be direct Gluttony or Drunkenness in some, will not satisfy Nature in others, at least not disorder it. And those, who, knowing their own Infirmary, disorder themselves with half, or a quarter so much as others are disorder'd by, are equally guilty with those who eat or drink as much more : So that the general Rule is, that none, neither strong nor weak, exceed so far as to occasion the least Disturbance or Perturbation to his superior Powers of Reason, the Guide of Action ; or become any Impediment, at any time, to any Duty of Life.

But neither is this a compleat Rule ; for some are of that Strength of Capacity, as a very great Quantity of strong Liquor will not intoxicate them, tho' they sit at it a long time ; nor will the greatest Excess disorder them. Therefore the Sin of Intemperance, in respect to such, does not lie in the Intoxication, but in the immoderate Use of the Creature ; and they are not the more innocent upon the Account of their great Strength. And accordingly, to cut off all that Pretence, which many are apt to make for the excusing themselves from intemperate Drinking, viz. " that they are not drunk therewith," the Prophet *Isaiab* lays the repeated Woe, or Curse, totally on that Strength, in which these Men place their Innocency ; for, says he, Ch. v. *Woe unto them that are mighty to drink Wine, and Men of Strength to mingle strong Drink.* And 'tis observable, that the Woe against intemperate Drinkers is twice expressed, at the 11th Verse, and again at the 22d, which denotes the Certainty of its Execution upon all that continue in the Quiet thereof. As when *Pharaoh's* Dream was repeated over again to him, *Joseph* tells him the Reason was, *because the Thing intended*

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tended thereby was establish'd by God, and would certainly come to pass. And so we may likewise assure ourselves, that this Woe or Curse, being repeated again, and twice laid down, is established by God, and will certainly be inflicted by him on every one that amends not of the Guilt of this Crime before him. On Continuance of this, after the Infliction of gentle Punishment, he declares in the same Chapter ; *for all this his Anger is not turned away, but his Hand is stretched out still.*

In the 3d place, it ought also to be remembered, that under this Evangelical Rule of Temperance is to be compriz'd our Thoughts and Inclinations, in order to their being govern'd as well as our Deeds and Actions: And if our Mastery do not extend to these, we do nothing, our Victory is incompleat, and we are yet in our Sins ; for our blessed Lord says, we may be guilty of Adultery by looking on a Woman, that is, by the evil adulterous Thoughts of the Heart, as well as in the Fact.

And thus far having survey'd the true Notion, thro' the true Measure of Christian Temperance, taken from the End of it, I am in

II. The next place to expose the Folly and mischievous Effects of Intemperance, in regard both to this World and the next.

And first, to reflect in general, how very shameful and opprobrious it is for Man, of all Creatures in the Universe, to be so perversely foolish to defeat the Ends of his Creation, or abuse the Privilege of his Redemption, and fall ingloriously from the Dignity of his excelling Nature, by suffering his Reason to be enslav'd to carnal Gratifications, or employ'd on no higher Purpose than to be a Procurer for the Flesh, and
its

its sensitive Affections, (to eat and drink, beget Children, and die) which was given him in Distinction, as a Prerogative over other sensible Creatures, on purpose to govern those inordinate Desires, which he has in common with them; and to shew that he is acted by a diviner Principle, and to higher Ends than they. But when he pursues the same low Projects of Sense that they do, how meanly does he descend, how culpably deviate from the Purpose of his Being? and how deservedly does he, who has so much better Pleasures than they to follow, fall short, in the mean time, of them, in the Enjoyments they afford? How justly do Disappointment in the Chase, with Dissatisfaction and After-regret in the Fruition, punish his wrong Choice, and convict him of Vanity and Vexation? Heaven has, in its wise Constitution of sublunary Things, put a Thorn and a Sting into its Pleasures, lest while we travel thro' this Wilderness, we should be desirous of making a Stand, and stopping short of the promised Country. Almost all of the Pleasure lies in the Expectation, and that which is in the Enjoyment is but a Cheat, never recompencing the Pains taken about it. If a Man would make himself no greater by his Designs, than the Beast of the Field, it is very fit he should be less, and taste much more imperfectly that Good of Sense, which he is so mean as to rival them in. Shall we name them degenerated Men, or more improved Brutes? A Beast of one's own making, (and not of God's) is a new Improvement indeed, a Reproach to the Maker, an Offence to God, and a Monster in the World. They pursue it without accusing Reflection, and their Desires and Endeavours can never be inordinate; for they have no Rule of Restraint, but when the Capacity of Pleasure will receive no more:

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more : They succeed too to purpose, and have perfect Satisfaction, (such as it is) without Repentance or Inconvenience. But foolish Man not only loses his Labour and Expectation, but his Innocence and Purity : His Peace of Conscience, and his Hopes of a better Life to come, change into fearful Expectation of Misery and Perdition, which awaits his mad, unchang'd Course of Life. That Men should take no other Advantage of being rational, but to lead the animal Life, and make it their chief Endeavour to destroy in themselves all that they have above the brute Creation ! That a rational Creature, to whom the Existence and Excellence of the Supreme Being, and the Resemblance and Happiness of the immortal Particle within him cannot be conceal'd, shou'd so unaccountably and unmeasurably decline and deride himself, as to make a God of his Belly, and offer up, as it were, Meat and Drink-Offerings thereunto ; shou'd be so buried and trodden down in the Pleasures, the irregular Pleasures of animal Good ; as if the rational Spirit was its Bond-Slave, put in Prison for want of Friends, and forced to be a Convert to the Swine and the Goat ! This is such a Shame, and among Men such an Abuse of Reason, as would not be credited, if it was not to be seen every Day. Nothing in the whole World, but Man, is capable of such a self-harming Madness, and destructive Absurdity. The Apostle often throws a Blush and Confusion on those intemperate, lascivious *Corinthians* he writes to, and upon his Reader in several Places of these Epistles, where he argues upon this Subject ; for who can conceive his Body the Mansion of an immortal Spirit, capable to receive the Grace of the Eternal God, and at the same time, by Gluttony and Drunkenness, entertain in that Place Fuel to inflame themselves into abominable Works

Works of the Flesh ; as if our Misery was our Study, and Chastity, Innocence, and Temperance, those easy and agreeable Companions, were not preferable to the contrary Disorders and Irregularities. It is indeed such a total Subversion and Contradiction to the great and glorious Ends he was ordain'd for, the Service, Praise, and Glory of his Maker ; that he is just as much subverted from his own Posture in the World, as if his Head should be seen to take the Place of his Heels, which must be a most incongruous Sight ; because Sense and Appetite in a Man ought to be as submissively inferior to Reason, as the Feet are made to be unto the Head. When it is otherwise, that is, when we deliver up our Minds to our Bodies, and so become Slaves to those Appetites, which ought to be our Servants, and we their Master, it is the same unnatural Sight. The Body is the Servant ; we should give our Servants what is just, and equal, and fitting, but not suffer them to domineer ; for there is nothing so insufferable as a *Servant when he reigneth*, as Solomon, who had many Servants, observes, *Prov. xxx. 22.*

I should proceed to evince the Particulars of the Folly of Intemperance ; but this, with the remaining Branches of Discourse, shall, God willing, be the subject of another Discourse.

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S E R M O N

The Second.

The Folly and Mischief of Intemperance, with Cautions against it.

A Second Sermon on 1 COR. ix. 25.

Every Man that striveth for the Mastery, is temperate in all Things.

IN my last Discourse on these Words I proposed these three Things.

- I. To shew wherein Temperance perfectly consists, what is its true Rule and Measure,
- II. To expose and dehort from the great Folly and Injurious Consequences of Intemperance, in Regard both to this World and the next.
- III. To suggest to Remembrance a few Rules and preserving Cautions against it.

The first Head was gone thro', and the second enter'd upon : Proceed we now to consider the Particulars of Health-wasting, Credit-sinking, Means-consuming, with other Damages and Depredations of Body and Mind consequent to it.— Begin we first with Health, that grand Blessing of God which should be preserved and cultivated by

by our Means, for rendring us capable of discharging the Operations of our Functions in Life, and for the better Enjoyment of our Being; without which nothing joyous or pleasant can be relish'd.—But what Havock and Destruction does it make of that Possession!—How many have cut themselves off from the Land of the Living before they have liv'd out half their Days? Most young Debauchees, by inordinate Courses and a fast Way of Living, advance their Constitution to many Years of Declension beyond the Date of their natural Age, and so by mere Folly anticipate their Death. The Proverb says true, “ he that eats and drinks little, eats and drinks much,” *i. e.* lives to do so; and he that too greedily loveth a sensual Life shall lose it. Too true is it in Experience, that very many Diseases and Decays of Nature enter into Man thro' the Gate of Intemperance. And the Throat of many a one, swallowing diseaseful Excess, has been an open Sepulchre to themselves.

Your River brings in foreign Conveniencies; it carries out the Growth of your own Soil: But when it breaks its Banks and transgresses its Bounds, what Waste and Damage is it the Author of? So the Channel of friendly Society and Entertainment, when it flows in Moderation, communicates Affability, Chearfulness, a good Neighbourhood, Friendship, and mutually receives and improves it. For People may be merry and sin not, as well as be angry and sin not; that is, by not losing your Reason at the same Time. But immoderate Quantity is a Transgression of reasonable and Christian Boundaries: Turns all to Clamour, Variance, or Abuse; to Danger in getting home; to Obnoxiousness there; to Head-achs and Sicknes; to Accusation of ones self, and every thing else that a wise Man would avoid
even

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even for the first Time ; and none but the Fool would be overtaken with twice. There are Deaths, Diseases, Poverty and overtaking Misfortunes, enough to convince us how dearly the Intemperate buys his Pleasures even as to this Life, without respecting how much more it may cost him as to that which is to come. Of all Men the Drunkard is the greatest Enemy to himself, as the common Voice of the People every where stiles him. The Son of Sirach (*Eclus. xxxi. 27.*) gives an excellent Precaution against Excess, yet at the same Time makes all due Allowance for temperate Drinking. *Wine, (says he) is as good as Life to a Man, if it be drunk moderately: Wine, measurably drunk and in Season, bringeth Gladness of Heart, and Chearfulness of the Mind; but when drunk with Excess, maketh Bitterness of Mind, with Brawling and Quarrel. Drunkenness overruleth the Rage of a Fool, till he find it diminisheth Strength, and maketh Wounds. Press not upon thy Neighbour by urging him to drink. If a Man would live long, and fain see good Days, he must live a sober regular Life. Besides, there is much more present Pleasure and Satisfaction in moderating a Desire than in glutting it to the Full; for Eating, after the Necessities and Cravings of Nature are replenish'd, is but Labour, Fatigue, and Unwieldiness; it is the cramming in of undigested Humours, the Materials of future Diseases, and the Crudities of an over-loaded Stomach render the Offender a Burthen, even to himself, uneasy, incapable to be born. The Sinner of this Kind rests like one on a Ship's Topmast in a Storm; he tumbles too and fro, and is at his Wit's Ends; his Reason being deluged with Liquor, and drowned in the over-flowing Fulness of dizzy Impertinence, if not offensive Raving. When all Things go round,*

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round, how can virtuous Resolutions of any Sort keep their Footing? Sin was the Yesterday's Companion of such a Bout, and on the To-morrow Sickness is added to it, both in Stomach, and in Conscience. So their Table and God's good Creatures by greedy Abuse become a Snare to take away Health, and with that to trepan them out of all Enjoyment of Life. Whereas Temperance is the Friend and Preserver of Strength and Vigour, the best Specifick yet found out in all the Dispensatory of Medicines for Prolongation of Life, giving quiet Days and easy Nights: *For sound Sleep* (says the Son of *Sirach*) *comes of moderate Eating*. A Man riseth early, and his Wits with him; it strengthens the Nerves, clears the Head for its proper Business, and comforts the Heart. For nothing perfects and secures Digestion like it, preventing that with ease, which after Cordials and Potions can with Difficulty, if at all, effect. By the Oeconomy of this one Virtue, the famous *Venetian* made a weakly Constitution last to one hundred Years. This is a Guardian to Wisdom, and to Prospering in this World; and the necessary Foundation whereon to erect Virtue, and good Works for the Fruition of the next: A true Friend to the Soul, corroborative of all excellent Habits. *Aristotle* could acknowledge, that the Discoveries of the noblest and most useful Truths are not to be attain'd but by a virtuous Man; that our intellectual Faculties are clouded or enlighten'd, impair'd or improved, according to the Disposition and Temper of our Bodies, and the Habits they are accustomed to. Temperance not only strengthens the Pleasures of the Mind; but encreases the Relish of bodily Sensations. He that moderates his Appetite, by the Rules of Reason and Religion, has got the true Secret of that Pleasure which is indulged by the God of our Nature,

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Nature, the favouring Gust that is conscious of no Ill, and undebauch'd with Things forbidden ; has in due Measure the Taste of God's good Creatures, the Bounties of his Hand ; whilst Surfeit and Intemperance pall the best of his Favours, and are the Bane of their Pleasure, the *felo de se* of their own Designs. Temperance, like all the Rest of its Growth, is both a beautiful, and sweet-tasted Fruit of the Spirit. But Excess is the very Folly of the Flesh ; a Poisoner of its Gratifications, and an Enemy to its Welfare. The Drunken Works of the Flesh are reckon'd up in Scripture in the same Condemnation with Heresy, as if it was Heresy against the true Good of human Body ; subverting the Foundation of Man's Governnient over himself, and making away with the Principle of common Discretion, in human Conduct. Yea, Temperance is the true Constitution of bodily Government, preserving true Liberty, in the Perfection of good Rule ; and returning the Governor the wholesom and serene Comforts of a peaceable and flourishing Dominion over himself. Where is your strong Limb, sound Complexion, and hail Constitution to be so often found, as with the moderate Fare, the Simplicity of Diet of the middling Sort of People ? And indeed this is a Blessing that equals them to the sickly luxurious Greatness and costly Varieties of the Rich, or rather gives them much the Preference ; a Possession without Pride or Envy, that bestows Enjoyment to the Body, and Tranquillity to the Mind.

2dly, In Respect to Circumstances of Fortune, What an insatiable Consumer is habitual indulg'd Intemperance ? Far gratifying sometimes, is not satisfying those irregular Appetites which have a dropical Thirst, that grows worse by appeasing it. How many have genteelly eat and drank themselves

themselves into Mortgages, which they have with some fashionable Diseases entailed on their unhappy Descendants? Not a few run in debt, and make unjust Incurfions on their Neighbours Credit to support their Extravagance; many an honest Tradesman and Artificer feels the Effects of their Licentiousness, all the Time they indulge their Excess in what they eat, and wear, and build; and they suffer the Ignominy of breaking Vows, Promises, and Oaths, to gain time to run the farther in Debt. How many do we observe spend a great Part of their Income or Earnings in constant Tippling (wherein they place all their Happiness) and thence are careless of Business, and unfit for it, much more unable to do those good Offices that become them as Christians. And at the same Time by that impoverishing Sin commit the greatest and most shameful Trespafs possible, I mean against their own Family, those of their own Household (which is worse than what the Infidel is guilty of:) The innocent Wife of your Bosom, with her Children, are suffering at Home a Diminution of that Allowance which should maintain them; reduced sometimes to a Morsel of Bread: And I need not quote these Places in *Solomon's Proverbs*, xxi. 17. 23. 27. to convince you that a Drunkard will come to Poverty. Is there not something prophetic in that *English Proverb*, *As drunk as a Beggar*; as if following those idle wastful Courses was then acknowledg'd the ready Way of becoming one. But how foolishly does the Constancy of carousing Good-fellowship presume to appropriate the Name of *good-natured* or *honest* to one of their Company? The Phrase itself is hardly sober; 'tis as if a Set of drunken Fellows, being in a Room together, should unanimously vote themselves sober, and all the Rest of the World drunk.

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drunk. For how bad in reality must that supposed Good-nature be, which needs the Expence of so much Wetting in the Morning, and so much Soaking at Night to make it mellow for Society? Most incomparable Good-nature, that has not Authority over itself to refuse any Thing injurious; or cannot bear the Cross of keeping Money in the Pocket! And what a meritorious Honesty must that needs be, which consists wholly in mutually doing and receiving the injurious Justice of the circling Bumper; or in paying the Reckoning so freely with that which should pay their Debts! Besides the doing Injustice to one's Family, how does this expensive Vice defraud the Poor, and all the occurring Works of Piety, of that Assistance which Persons given to Sotting might otherwise have spared? What unfaithful wicked Stewards are they of that Talent of worldly Substance, who thus mispend and lavish away what God entrusted them with for better Uses! The very Inclination of doing good unto others is drowned in this beastly selfish Vice; as the rich Glutton in the Gospel had lost all Compassion for miserable poor *Lazarus*. They that are habituated to it know no End in gratifying, till they have spent all their own Means and Earnings, and all they can find Credit for from others; and thereby involve in this Ruin not only their own Families, but many others suffer also, and thus in the highest Manner of Injustice they make the Innocent suffer for the Wicked.

Next, as to Credit and Reputation, it stigmatizes a Man with the Name of Sot, a Name that carries Infamy, Riot, and Debauchery in it; signifying in short, a Man of profligate Manners. The Sot, a very few Instances excepted, generally is negligent in whatever Office he fills, either of Friend, Father, or Husband; and being

careless of his own Affairs, is unfit to be trusted either with the Business or Secrets of others; as useless to the World as he is to himself: Sottishness renders Youth inglorious, and Age shameful; and when the Goal or Poverty is the Consequence, the simple Wretch becomes a Spectacle of Contempt, and an Example to deter others. 'Tis an Honour to the Laws of *Spain*, that a Man loses his Testimony when it is proved he has been once drunk. It wou'd be a great Defect in ours, if the common Drunkard was not subjected to an Indictment. Besides, how many accidental Mischiefs attend Drunkenness, which every body has heard of or been Witness too? Quarrels even of best Friends, Fighting, Murther, frequent Calumnies, sometimes Blasphemies, or other wicked Actions, innumerable Follies and fatal Catastrophes, have at several Times proceeded from this Flood-gate of Iniquity and Disorder: For 'tis a sort of voluntary Madness, that emboldens Men to do all sort of Mischief, and discover what they do: It does not so much make Men to be vicious, but shews them to be so. The Word which signifies Sobriety in the *Greek Testament*, is the same which implies a sound Mind; as if the contrary to Sobriety was egregious Folly, Inconsideration, and no sound Mind or Wisdom to be look'd for without it. To part with Reason when we have such need of it, is like breaking the Compass in Pieces, or throwing the Pilot overboard in a Storm. The wise and the royal Preacher enumerates several of these Evils, and ascribes them to the true Author. *Who bath Woe? (says he) who bath Sorrow? who bath Contention? who bath Babling? who bath Wounds without Cause? who bath Redness of Eyes?* The Answer is, *They that tarry long at the Wine,* Prov. xxix. 30.

But

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But if we turn our Prospect to the Soul, and the other World, the Mischief is still much worse ; for those Excesses numb and besot the Mind, and rob it of its Strength, and dissolve it into Sloth and Dissoluteness ; impair the Understanding, and enervate even the Organs of Reason, when Reason is once subjected to that rebelling Party within us, which it ought to have in perpetual Subjection : And thus the Man wounds, and debases, and disguises himself in the very Glory and Distinction of his Nature, instead of reverencing it as he ought ; for Reason and Understanding are the Excellency and Supremacy of our Nature above other sublunary Creatures : He that is endowed with these in a higher Degree above others, is so much the more excellent than they ; for by these a Man is enabled to look into the sublimest Truths, by these he is capacitated for the Attainments of Knowledge and Wisdom, which give him the largest Advantages of doing Service to God, and Good to Mankind, and becoming, above all others, qualified thereby for the highest Stations of Life, the noblest and most glorious Acts that can be performed : And therefore when a Man is divested and defaced of these, he loseth the very Ornaments of his Nature, and the greatest Esteem of Excellency he can be possess'd of. And by indulging himself in this degrading Sin, he whom God made as an Angel of Light, for the Society of Angels, makes himself to be as the Beast that perisheth. And how often do those Computations and Merry-meetings steal the Man away, and leave the helpless Beast in the Place ? Or if he carries away his Load with much ado, how much worse is he than the Beast of Burthen. Next that of *Adam*, what greater Fault can our Nature suffer, than thus to be degraded from Man to Brute ? what greater Calamity can a reasonable Man in-

flieſt on himſelf? How much Weakneſs, how many ridiculous Things does it betray to? what Advantage does it give others to praſtiſe their circumventing Deſigns on the Perſons in Drink? What dangerous Truths, and ruining Secrets, does it ſometimes ſtammer out? But, which is worſe, how generally does it debauch the Morals? 'Tis almoſt always a complex Vice, ſeldom a ſingle one; nor is it truer of any of the Vices than of this, *quo quis peccat eodem punitur, i. e.* it is its own Punishment.

Drunkenneſs not only breaks Men's Fortunes, but oftentimes their Spirits afterwards, by reflecting on their paſt Folly: And thoſe deep Draughts, wherein Men ſeek to drown their Conſcience and Melancholy, leave behind them an Uneaſineſs of both Body and Mind, and the ſour Regrets of Conſcience and Stomach ariſe up together: For many Men drink, not for the Love of the Company, but of the Liquor; many, not to quench their Thirſt, but their Conſcience, as if the putting more Guilt in was the way to pull the Sting of Sin out. 'Tis a Way indeed to ſtrangle their Conſcience and beſt Friend, as the Prophet *Hoſea* assures us, *Wine and Drunkenneſs take away Health*, and doze away Reason and Life. To feed the Luſts that war againſt the Soul, and bury all that looks hopeful of the Chriſtian in him, till nothing but the bare, the falſe Name of Chriſtian, or being chriſtian'd, ſurvives, (a confounding Shame to his Baptiſm, and an apparent Proof the Devil is not yet renounced) that is the Calamity, that is the moſt tremendous Conſequence of all! Not only Health, Fortune, Reputation, go to wreck; but it kills the Soul in the ſpiritual Senſe, ruins its higheſt Intereſt, ſtupifies its beſt Functions and Operations, extinguishes all good Diſpoſitions, and drives away the Spirit
of

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of God in dreadful Disgust at so much Sacrilege and Filthiness, done to that holy and pure Temple he would possess in us. When the Soul is carnaliz'd, the Conscience is, as it were, scar'd with a hot Iron; past tasting the Delights of Virtue and divine Truth, the Food of good Men and Angels; remains sunk and lost in Trespases and Sins, (as the Widow that lived in Pleasure is accounted by the Apostle to be dead while she lived.) Drunkenness wastes our Consciences and our Virtue, to the same Degree of Decay that it does our Bodies, our Minds, and Estates: For when we thus defile ourselves with this loathsome Sin, the holy Spirit of God, the Fountain and Author of all Grace, cannot dwell in such polluted Temples; and if we so grieve him as to leave us, all manner of Grace and Assistance to do his Will must also leave us at the same time: So the Man is stript of a natural, as well as a spiritual Power to do any thing worthy of himself in the governing his Passions; for our Passions at all times are apt enough to rebel in our soberest Intervals, and we need even then, not only all the Helps of Nature, but also the much stronger Assistance of Grace to keep them in order: But when we have not only repuls'd the Aid of the Spirit, but also turn'd our Reason, the natural Guide which God has given us in Life, into Reeling and Misrule, we are liable to all those Extravagancies and Disorders, which our wild Nature, and ungovern'd Passions may drive us into: And a Man, thus divested of God and himself, is delivered, as it were, bound Hand and Foot into the Power of the Devil, who is watchful to improve all Advantages against us to our eternal Ruin; and this Common-sewer of Sensuality is a very broad Way into it. 'Tis in regard to the Snares of this most vigilant, implacable Adversary, that St. Peter,

1 Ep.

1 Ep. v. 8. directs us to Sobriety, as the chief means of defeating him, as 'tis our only Capacity of watching against him; *Be sober, be vigilant, because your Adversary the Devil goeth about as a roaring Lion*; implying that there is no Possibility of being vigilant, unless we are also sober; and as often as we pass the Bounds of Sobriety, we are off our Guard, and give him the wish'd-for Advantage against us, to lead us into all Sins that he can instigate to thro' our corrupt Flesh; and whilst the Man lives only the Life of Sense, according to the Dictates of fleshly Affections, he is dead as to the Purposes of a Christian; and every Indulging to vicious Excess is like throwing on a greater Load of Earth, and burying the Soul alive. They have this Curse generally upon them, of falling from one Wickedness to another; and when they have long persisted in it, become at last insensible of their Danger, which has occasion'd so many timely Warnings and Importunities from the Holy Spirit to admonish Men, before it is too late, of the absolute, indispensable Necessity of weaning their Affections, in order to gain an Interest in, and Influence from that Heavenly Assistance, by which alone we are able to obtain the Victory over our Body, and persevere unto the End; whose Principle it is to teach and persuade us to mortify our Members and deprav'd Desires, and crucify the Flesh, with its Affections and Lusts, that we may be conform'd to the Image of Christ, who was crucified for us.

And as it leaves no comfortable Enjoyment in this World, so does an irregular, intemperate Course of Life, exclude all possible Hopes of the Blessedness of another World; for the contrary is positively declar'd in many Places of Scripture, which are so well known, as need not be repeated. In Gal. v. Drunkenness is particularly
number'd

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number'd up, and put in the same Rank with Idolatry and Murder, the highest of Crimes : And why shou'd it not be match'd with them, since Idolatry turns the Image of a Beast into a God, but Drunkenness sinks the Image of God into a Beast ? In the Nature of the Thing, nothing impure or unclean can enter into Heaven, that holy Place ; neither, if they did, cou'd such Affections receive any the least Happiness from the Joys of that Place ; but it wou'd be a Hell to them in the midst of Heaven, and they no more capable of liking that Bliss, Glory, and Harmony, than a deaf Man is of Musick. And perhaps it is no small Part of the Punishment of those foolish Spirits, who were so mad to lose the immortal Felicity they were offered and courted to, for the little, transitory, sickly Gratifications that scarce out-live the tasting : I say, Part of their Torment and Suffering may fitly consist, for their too much, and eager indulging carnal Inclinations, that they carry those same carnal Inclinations into the spiritual World, where they will for ever burn with a fruitless Hankering after the same Pleasures, which are, and will be for ever impossible to be enjoy'd.

That we may therefore escape those many and horrible Complications of Pains, both present and to come, and comply with the Direction in the Text, of *being temperate in all Things*, let me conclude with bringing to your Remembrance a few Rules and preserving Cautions. I said at my first Entrance on this Subject, that every one's Constitution is his Judge and Measure. And here the

First Rule I wou'd lay down, is not to allow ourselves to the utmost Bounds of Sobriety, but deny ourselves those Liberties that are upon the Brink of Sin and Excess. Without the Govern-
ment

ment of intervening Prudence to put a Stop when 'tis enough, the Bias runs insensibly to Intoxication: And if a Man ventures so far as to the very small Line that parts Duty from Sin, 'tis ten to one but he slides into the Latter. *In licitis perimus omnes*, is a famous saying, that is, that we are generally undone by lawful Things, *i. e.* by straining them too far. It is then our Wisdom to keep on the safest Side of Doubt and Danger. *He that resisteth Pleasure*, says the Son of Sirach, *crowneth his Life; he that pleaseth himself beyond Measure, pleaseth a Fool and displeaseth God.* The Rule to cure Intemperance is to propose to do it gradually, by contrary Habits. *This Kind goes not out but by Fasting and Prayer;* and the Way to set a crooked Stick straight, is to keep it bent some time the contrary Way.

2. To gain by Degrees an entire Mastery over ourselves, it is a great Convenience, and a salutary Policy, first to begin to command and give the Check to our Appetites in less Things; to be abstemiously upon the Reserve sometimes even in lawful Enjoyments, that we may the better know how to obey in greater Forbearances and Self-denial, when Religion and Prudence demand it; and so win Ground Inch by Inch to perfect Victory in Time, till at last we are dead to this World, and above the Power of every Solicitation whether from within or from without us, unto any thing that is Evil.

3. Those who know they cannot command themselves, must shun as much as possible their Bon Companions, and all Occasions that used to betray them into Folly and Feasting, and be as afraid of spending their Penny with them as of leaping into a Precipice. *Shew not your Valiantness in Wine* (says the wise Man) *Eclus. xxxi. 25. for Wine has destroyed many.* Let not mistaken Civility,

or

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or Good-nature in pledging Healths without Measure, delude you out of your own Health. Believe yourself no more obliged to go on to Excess, than to drink a Cup of Poison, because another drank to you; for every intemperate Glass has the Nature of Poison both to Body and Soul. And let not the Reproach of the Drunkards, for your not running into the same Excess of Riot with them, fright you out of your Sobriety and Innocence. He that eats and drinks in a sparing Measure, in Reserve for the due End of both, eats and drinks not only for present Pleasure, but future. But to transgress both in the Quantity, and in the Mixture (as is very usual) of Heaven, Earth and Sea, winged Fowl and Fish, Products of Land with the Fire of Spices all together in one Bowl, some thundering Disorder may well be expected: Therefore if you are a Man given to Appetite, says the same wise Adviser, *put a Knife to your Throat*. Good is the Rule of Bp. Taylor; if not his Words, I express his Sense: "Whenever your Discretion begins to think you have enough, either in Eating or Drinking, then it is you have enough, and let me add, that none is ever sorry after stinting themselves within the Bounds of Moderation, but all have and will repent themselves of glutting to the full. Surely, we ought to remember ourselves as born to greater Things, as professing greater Things, taught greater Things, than to make a Business of living to the Joys of Sense, and the Indulgence of that Body which presseth down the Soul, and is of a short Continuance. When the Liquor glories in the Glass, by which I include all the Temptations that can be in the Liquor; and when Conversation grows pleasant, under which I wou'd comprehend all the Temptations of Company;

pany; then beware of too much, then be resolved against staying too long. Instead of other Motto's and Inscriptions upon Glasses, or Drinking-vessels, methinks this wou'd be more instructive and becoming. *This is your Friend, if you are not your own Enemy.* But never let this Caution of our blessed Lord be out of Mind, *Luke xxi. 34. Take heed to yourselves, that your Hearts be not overcharg'd with Surfeiting and Drunkenness.* Mahometans cou'd observe the Precepts of their Law-giver, and the *Recabites* the Counsel of *Recab* their Father, in totally abstaining from Wine; and shall not our Master *Christ* be regarded when he forbids only Excess? And therefore,

In the last Place, call in the Help of Prayers, that ye may use the good Creatures with Moderation and Thankfulness, and never so as to abuse them: Put on the firm Armour of Faith and Hope, and then ye shall comparatively despise the mean and unsatisfying Pleasures of animal Good. If ye believe in good earnest a future Judgment, and the Joys and the Miseries of the Life to come, unconceivable for their Greatness and the Everlastingness of their Duration, it would be the childishest Action and the foolishhest Bargain, that ever was yet made in the World, to comply with the Temptation of a Pleasure for a Moment, to the certain Loss of one and Sufferance of the other. Let us then believe these Things positively and to purpose, rather than not disbelieve them to no Influence or Effect. Let us carry these Considerations about with us, to give an Answer and Repulse to every Temptation; think of one Consequence of Intemperance, and look up in Faith to the incorruptible Crown (as the Words after my Text and in the same Verse recommends) and consider whether it is not worth our while to undergo some Hardships, whatever they be, to obtain

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obtain it. All the Hardship hinted at in this Place is to be temperate in all Things, which is truly the greatest Pleasure and Relisher of Pleasure in the World, secures all the Advantages and Blessings of this Life, and fits and prepares for a better to come. Let us then, in one Word, according to the Design of Christianity, *draw our Affections from things below; set 'em on Things above;* preserve the Heavenly Part in us in its due Elevation above the sensible Things that are seen, and bring our Body into Subjection to our Soul, our Senses to our Reason, and our Reason to God's Grace; that in all the Constituents of Man's Soul, Body, and Spirit, we may all serve and obey him both here and hereafter; which God grant that we may every one be so wise to do!



S E R

~~THE SERMONS OF~~
For Sexagesima Sunday.

SERMON

The Third.

*How far we may not mind earthly
Things.*

LUKE viii. 14. Part of the Gospel for the
Day.

*And that which fell among Thorns are they which
when they have heard go forth, and are choak'd
with Cares, and Riches, and Pleasures of this
Life, and bring no Fruit to Perfection.*

THIS most instructive Parable of the
Sower and the Seed deserves our
frequent and serious Consideration,
as it so excellently and particularly
represents each to himself the spiritual State and
Condition of Christians in the several Seed-Plots
where the Word of God is sown by the appointed
Seeds-man, that goes out according to the Or-
ders and Directions of the great Heavenly Hus-
bandman; whose Husbandry all we Christians
are, in the Phrase of other Scriptures. It ac-
quaints us of the Necessity of Seed, without
which

Of minding Earthly Things. 33

which there is no Fruit to be expected; of the Manner also of Sowing, that it is indifferently to be strown in due Measure, Quantity, and Goodness, in all Parts of the Field alike, where the Husbandman is desirous of a Crop, (and his Desire to be sure is that no Part be barren.) It next describes the true Cause and Reason why so much Seed miscarried, notwithstanding so much Pains and Culture: To what it is wholly and solely to be imputed, that such Abundance of the sown Seed brought forth no Fruit at all; and Abundance more, even twice as much, in the Representation of the Parable, brought none on to Perfection, which, by comparing the three Evangelists together, is concluded to be the very same Thing as if it had been quite lost at first. This instructing Metaphor represents the Default to be altogether in the Ground and Soil why it came to pass that some Seed sprung not up, and wherefore other some continued not to grow up to Maturity; for it is extremely observable, that here is no Mention made of Inclemency of Weather, of Blast or Mildew, of the Want of fructifying Rain, or of too much of it; by the Means of any of which the good Seed might have been rendered abortive, tho' the Ground was never so good, or never so well prepared, and cultivated; but, as nothing of these is intimated, it plainly supposes, what is most certain, that there is nothing wanting on God's Part, to second and prosper every Seed of his divine Word, which is sown in our Hearts. That it is therefore in every Hearer's free Power to be fruitful even to the Hundred-fold Increase, the highest the Parable speaks of. Here is no Fault found with the Seed; that to be sure was good in Kind, because it is a Sample of that sent down from Heaven; nor is there any Blame cast upon the Sower, as if

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he had scatter'd too sparingly or in an unhusbandly Way, or omitted any Thing on his Part that could contribute to a hopeful Crop; but the Imputation of Blame lights upon the Ground which respectively receives the Seed; and what is that Ground but the Heart of every Hearer, according to our Lord's Explanation of this Parable? There lies the Defect, there is the conscious Cause of Non-improvement. For if some make their Heart like unto an High-way, for all sorts of trifling, vain, idle Thoughts, to pass and repass; no wonder the serious Impression from the Conviction of God's Word is presently stolen away by the Devil, whose incessant Business it is to obstruct every Thing that is good. They either attend not, or, which is much at one, they reflect not as they ought, by making close Application to the Case and Condition of their own Souls, misremembring and misapplying all to their Neighbours. There is a great deal of such sort of Ground in Proportion to the Good. There is intimated also another Sort of Hearers, who very seriously attend, and with seeming Delight, to in the Heavenly Food; yet if the Obligations to obey put them to much Trouble or Inconvenience, they presently fall off, and from that Time the fair Hope they promise of Fruit withers and dies away, because the Root, the Basis of Life, was but shallow, having not Room to strike deep by Reason of the Rockiness of the Soil. The next and other Sort of Hearers seem to make a farther Progress than either of the other; they take Root deep enough; but still another Defect is present to mar and spoil all, effectually obstructing the Fruit from coming to its desired Perfection, which is e'en as bad in the Event as if nothing had been sown, or nothing come up. They comprehend a very great

Number

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Number of Christians, and these are they which are represented in the Words of the Text. *That which fell among Thorns are they, which when they have heard go forth, and are choak'd with the Cares, and Riches, and Pleasures of this Life, and bring no Fruit to Perfection.* These are the most general Lets and Impediments which make a great many Christian Professors finally miscarry, who yet shew very great Regard to Religion, attend its sacred Ordinances with Seriousness, and practise several of its Duties; but still, thro' too great Fondness and Love for present temporal Things, they lose those which are eternal: Their over eager Pursuits of the Interests of the Former slacken their Endeavors and abate their Desires after the Latter, as their true; their only Felicity: The Deceitfulness of Riches, the Beguilements of sensual Pleasure, get the upper Hand over the Things of God and another World, and suppress and keep them under in our Affections: Just as Thorns and Briars in a Field, by their Entanglements and over-topping the Corn, backen and choak its Growth, keep it from ripening and coming to due Perfection. Even our honest lawful Cares about the Affairs of this World are excessively apt to steal away our Hearts, too much devour our Time and Strength, and leave us too little Leisure or too little Inclination to follow our chief Concern and Business, which is the great End of our Living, the Glory of God, and the Salvation of our Souls. Almost all Christians seem to be sick of the same Distemper, of loving this present World too much, to the Prejudice of their Souls: And too many do as it were secretly hope and desire the Exception which *Nabaman the Assyrian* put into his Religion, that *the Lord wou'd pardon us his Servants in that one Thing.* So strangely is the Soul

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taken with sensible Things, so intimately and familiarly has she been bred up and nurs'd by this World, that she cannot help being affected with strong and lively Passions for the Things of it. We would serve God willingly, provided he wou'd be contented to be served in the second Place, and permit us to bestow our choicest Care and Affection on that which we love and like so much better; and tho' he prohibits and interdicts it never so much, yet we generally slide into the Extreme, after the Fashion of the World, and, so doing, bring little Fruit of Holiness to Perfection, tho' Abundance of good Seed is sown, and began to come up too. As it was in the Beginning of the Christian Institution, so it is now: In *Job. vi. 66.* we read, *From that Time many of his Disciples went back, and walk'd no more with Jesus, i. e.* from the Time he preach'd the Disagreeable Doctrine of *Labouring not for the Meat which perisheth*, mentioned 26, 27, Verses. This is the Interruption, the Occasion of all our Slackness in the Ways of our Duty, and of that Indifference and Lukewarmness to the Things of God, and of every Deviation in our Pursuit of eternal Happiness: It gradually eats into the Heart of Religion, and consumes its Power over us; mean time an external Form and fair Appearance remains in the Eye of the World. I would ask what is it that gives Strength to any Temptation from all that is in this World, *the Lust of the Eye, the Lust of the Flesh, and the Pride of Life*, but an over high Opinion of them, and a Want of taking into Consideration a true Estimate what they are in themselves, and what they would deprive us of. That thus it is in Fact, is only too notorious to need any Proof; and it is greatly to be wish'd that the Scripture I have now read, was not so generally fulfill'd,

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as it is, in the Ears of so great a Part of every Audience. We have only then to enquire out a Remedy for so great an Evil, and apply it by Way of Cure for the past, and Prevention for the future. And this I shall endeavour under such Considerations, as, I hope, will effectually reclaim us to the contrary Duty, by reducing our irregular misplac'd Affections to their true Aim and Object, and keeping those Cares, Sollicitudes, and Gratifications of this Life so well under, as not to choak the Word, the Seed of another Life, so as to hinder its growing to Perfection.

This I reserve to do in the Ild Place, after I have

Ist, enquired how far the lawful Care of making Provision for this World, and enjoying the innocent Pleasures and Refreshments thereof, is consistent at the same Time with the bounden Love of God, and the Concerns of our immortal Souls. For it is to be observed that all Cares and Pleasures are not prohibited; nor is any Thing restrained or denied us but the guilty Excesses and Abuses in those Particulars, viz. the immoderate and the anxious Pursuits of the one, and the intemperate and irregular Enjoyment of the other.

We are not bid to make Vows of Poverty, or throw away our Riches already acquired, or cease our honest Endeavours after them, because they are as so many Opportunities of doing more extensive good, and, as *St. Paul* says, of laying up, by a due sanctified Use, a good Foundation for the Time to come. How true and deplorable soever it is that Riches are misused, or unused to the Owner's Hurt, and to the Destruction and eternal Misery of so many Possessors of them; yet, were they but regularly sought after, and rightly applied in the expending, they wou'd

be so far from endamaging the Soul, that they wou'd occasionally build and raise up her Happiness, and Reward of Blessedness, much higher in the Heavens. We are not debarred the tasting the good Things that are before us; for they were of God created good for that very Purpose. Neither does he, any where, lay his Commands on us to separate ourselves wholly from the World, and retire to Monasteries and Desarts: That would be inconsistent with his other Commands, and we must undutifully abandon those other Obligations he has put us under of shewing a good Example, and letting *our Light shine* before Men, which is a Debt due to the Publick, as well as those Opportunities of serving Society and our Country, and doing all the Good we can in our Generation: For we are obliged to embrace every Opportunity, and neglect no Occasion of promoting the spiritual and temporal Advantages of our Neighbour. Walk we may and must in the Flesh, but not after it, as if we had no other Scope; that is all our Caution, that is all that is forbidden. We may feel its Desires, but not be led by them as by Controulers of all our Actions: We must labour to become poor in Spirit and of heavenly Temper, in the Midst of Abundance of this World's Goods; to be temperate amongst the Baits and Opportunities of Pleasure; to use those things well which Custom has abused; to withdraw ourselves from all sinful Inveiglements, and not be carryed away with the prevailing Course of them, but shew unto the World a more excellent Way, not in the Stoical Manner of throwing away all, or by removing our Person from it (common with some mistaken Zealots in *Roman Catholick* Countries) but by withholding only our Esteem and Affections. We may (as one of the Fathers * expresses

* *Justin Martyr.*

presses it) " be in the World, but not of it,
 " just as the Soul is in the Body, but not of the
 " Body : He that is dead to the World, is not in
 " the World, but in God unto whom he lives; for
 " this is a most sure and faithful Testimony
 " that such a one is in *Christ*, and *Christ* in
 " him." We must not be Children of it so as to
 think of no other Father, or entertain Thoughts of
 having our Portion only in this Life; but we
 may innocently regard even this World in a
 low Degree, provided we love the Father of
 our Spirits in a Superior; for in equal Degree
 and Measure they will be as inconsistent Objects
 to find place in the same Heart, as contrary in
 the same Subject: They are and must be at
 eternal Strife and Rivalship, and ever will be
 expelling each the other; as one is predominant
 and intense, the other infallibly retires and be-
 comes remiss. The Mistake is, Men enjoy
 that which they should only use, and use that
 which they should in Truth place their Enjoy-
 ment in: Because Men must *use* this World, they
 make so little Conscience to run into the Abuse of
 it. This is the continual Error and Bait that
 deceives Men, corrupts Religion and the Love of
 God, and blasts the Fruit of it: They imagine
 they may equally share their Affections between
 them, and love the World which is present, if
 not more, at least as much as they love God
 who is invisible; but that is morally impossible:
 So saith the Scripture, *If any Man love the World,*
the Love of the Father is not in him, and the Friend-
ship of this World is Enmity with God, and that
 if we will cleave to *the one*, we shall certainly
 for that Reason *forsake the other*. The alienating
 our Hearts from one, directly tends to endear
 and strengthen our Love for the other: In every
 Choice of such contrary Things, we cannot take

one, without leaving the other: *The double-minded Man*, who would cleave both to God and the World, *is for this Cause unstable in all his Ways*, distracted and divided like the Man that has two opposite Purposes and neglects them both. But he is the wise Man, and endued with Understanding both for this World, and that which is to come, who proposes one chief Good, and that is God; one chief End, and that is Heaven; and pursues them with an undivided Affection, suffering no Partnership nor Competition to arise; who obeys his great Master and Saviour in the Manner he has directed his Choice and Preference about the Dignity and the Worth of Things, by *seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*; and then, in the next Place, bestowing his secondary Cares on the Business and Employments subservient to this Animal Life. And this every one is at Liberty to prosecute, and with perfect good Consistency with the other; provided he would bear in Mind and observe such few Cautions and Directions as these;

1. That we follow and contend for worldly good Things in due Order.
2. That we mind them in proper Time and Season.
3. That we desire them not beyond their just Measure.
4. That we pursue them not with Over-eagerness.

With these Rules carefully practised and remembered, we shall still preserve a Conscience void of offending God, and keep our Affections Above, where it ought to be our supreme Carefulness to be laying up Treasure. If we are effectually weaned from a Fondness to every Thing

thing here below, which certainly interferes with, and obstructs the other Pursuit, we may still go on safely to love and labour after earthly Conveniencies, and at the same time preserve our Integrity, and the Favour of God: For do we desire and value them only in Subordination to the Hopes of better and more durable Possession, and the superior Affection we owe God, and by way of Opportunity and Accommodation for his Service? Have we no passionate Eagerness or Covetousness, either to get, or to keep them, for their own Sake, but as a Trust from him who gives them, and for the good Services they may be put to, and the Benefit that others may receive thereby? If we act upon these Christian Principles, then shall we lead the Life of the Spirit, and the Fruits thereof may live and grow in us, and bring forth Effects to Perfection in all holy Obedience; then will the Seed of God's Word that is sown in our Souls, not be clog'd and choak'd with incumbering Cares of many Things, or the Seducements of unlawful Pleasure, but may kindly bring forth its Fruits in due Season, in all the Virtues of a good Conversation. And that it may do so, I shall in the

II^d Place, remind you of some Considerations that may conduce to suppress the Growth of those Thorns that are so pernicious and destructive to it. And first, consider we how properly and appositely these Cares after Riches are in this Place stiled *Thorns*, seeing they do so experimentally prick and tear the Hearts of those who are given up to the Love, and incessant Pursuits and Projects after them. St. Paul elegantly says of Men possess'd with the Love of Money, that *they pierce themselves thro' with many Sorrows*, 1 Tim. vi. 10. The anxious Concern, and eager Desire of encreasing, what Toils, Troubles, and Dangers does

does it involve in? What Briars and Thorns, and all Sorts of Hardships do Men wade thro' to come at them? And when the dear Purchase is gained, what consequent Fears encompass and distract the Heart of the Owner, lest they shou'd be lost or diminished? So that even on this Consideration, if we consulted our own Ease and Enjoyment, we should be intreated to contract our Desires, and moderate our Endeavours after them; and suffer the Precepts of Religion to remove all that Disquietude and Anxiety, which makes many a Worldling miserable even in this Life; and persuade him to be more indifferent, whether he succeeded in his Aims or not, knowing that the backwarder he is set in those, by the disappointing Hand of Providence, the forwarder, if it is not his Fault, he may be promoted in better Things, even his true Treasure, the enduring Riches: And, upon a true Computation of Things, his Losses would rather be found to be his greatest Gain; especially considering the fatal Perils and Dangers, which the Encrease and Affluence of worldly Goods bring to the Soul; for so the Apostle well knew and forewarns, when he says, *they that wou'd be rich run into divers Temptations, and sundry Lusts which hurt the Soul*, war against it, and by general Experience supplant and ruin it. The Temptations and Opportunities are so very many, and so hard to be resisted, and not trusted and relied on for Happiness by the corrupt Inclinations of human Nature, that it is easier, in our Lord's Estimate, *for a Camel to go thro' a Needle's Eye, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Reflect we next on the intrinsic Worthlessness of those Possessions; and it will matter yet less, whether we enjoy them in Reality, or in Opinion. If it is our own deluded Fancy and
Imagi-

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Imagination, which sets the extravagant Value and Esteem, we have only to correct and exchange our false Notions of Wealth, Power, Honour, Pleasure; and we shall soon discern of what little Importance these things are to us. Be we but thoroughly persuaded that the greatest Riches is to be rich in good Works, and a present Competency of such Things as administer to the Interest of Virtue, and to the real, not fantastick Ends of Living; that Honour is the Lustre and Reflection of great and good Actions; that Power is the Dominion over our own Passions; that Pleasure is the Enjoyment of Virtue, and a good Conscience; and we shall presently discern that our Happiness depends not so much on those Things which are the Idols of the World, and employ so much of its Cares and Longings. "We should soon correct our Opinion, and have a right Judgment of Things, did we take so much Consideration to represent to ourselves the present State and Posture of our Affairs during our Residence here, namely, that we are a sort of Being, every Moment travelling from hence to an eternal World, where an inexpressible Happiness or Misery attends us; and all that we enjoy or suffer in this transient Life, is only the Convenience or Inconvenience of a short Journey to a long Home, but can have no other Influence upon our everlasting Condition, than as it is the Occasion either of our Virtue or Vice here, which are the only Goods and Evils that can accompany us to Eternity, and make us happy or miserable there for ever." But as for secular Riches, or Pleasures, or Honours, which engross so much of our Time, they will probably in a few Years take their Leave of us, or we of them. It is certain, whatever seeming Comfort there is in them at present, they will none of them afford any

any at that time, when there is most need of Comfort, at the Hour of Death, and the Day of Judgment. Nay, it is farther, by innumerable Experiments, clear and certain, that they are all unsatisfactory in the Enjoyment. And this is another Consideration to take off our eager Pursuit, viz.

That they are vain and unsatisfying at the best. "The World indeed promises great Things to its Lovers and Votaries; and truly to see Men so warm and intent in following after its Interests and Enjoyments, pitying those that want them, and envying those who have them, one would be apt to think there was really more solid Happiness in them than there is; but the wisest, and the greatest Enquirer, found just nothing after his Royal Search, *but Vanity and Vexation*; and all those who come after him have prov'd the same Thing by Experience." So true is it, that *Man walketh in a vain Shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain*. Strange Enchantment that, after so many, and such wise Men, who wanted neither Penetration, nor any sort of Opportunity to know the Bottom, and yet have all unanimously made the Report of Fallacy and Delusion in the Enjoyment, nothing will satisfy but our own experimental Conviction, that we pursue and propose that Happiness in them, which never was, nor ever will be found. Sensual Pleasure promises fair and agreeable Things, and consequently is so much the more dangerous, as it is an Enemy under the Disguise of our best Friend; but what does Solomon resemble it to, but the *crackling of Thorns under a Pot, which presently goes out in a Blaze*; than which, besides, as if it retained the Property of Thorns, nothing stings those, that indulge themselves therein more in the Conclusion thereof.

The

Of minding Earthly Things. 45

The short Fruition only secures eternal Bitterness, and drowns the Taste of the spiritual and manly Pleasure, and excludes from ever tasting of those *Rivers of Pleasure, which are at God's right Hand*, which are ever flowing and overflowing to all Eternity. "Our blessed Lord has told us, that there is *neither eating, nor drinking, nor marrying, nor giving in Marriage in Heaven, but that we shall be like the Angels*, after Resurrection; which is a Demonstration, and invincible Argument of the Vanity and Vileness of earthly Pleasures, seeing we cannot be made happy without the Loss of them."

Let us remember, in the next place, that they are not only vain and deficient in their own Natures; but also transient and momentary in their Duration: This all worldly Things are inevitably subject to, as well the Things possess'd, as the Possessors of them: The first are always on the float, shifting and changing from one to another: Riches frequently fly away on a sudden, upon the Wings which God has given to their fleeting Nature, and are often seen no more, as by Fire, Shipwreck, Innundation; by many and various Accidents, undiscoverable to our Prudence to prevent. Or if they stay any Time, yet we know of a Surety that our Time is short; and that it may be shorter than any of us suspect by sudden Death; and whenever it approaches, how pat and melancholy are the Words of the Son of Sirach? *O Death, how bitter is the Remembrance of thee to a Man that liveth at Rest in his Possessions, unto the Man that hath nothing to vex him, and hath Prosperity in all Things!* O dreadful Time, when none of his delectable Things, which were so dear to him, shall profit him ought; when nothing of all his carking and hoarding will avail any otherwise, than to help to torment him

him with the guilty Remembrance how ill he acquir'd them, and how basely, and contrary to the very Nature and End of them he possessed them. What a Parting must that be! and how should we correct our Estimate, if our Pomp, Wealth, our Delights, which we thirst after so ardently, and think no Pains too much to compass, must come to so sad an End? What is the Man the better for having liv'd in luxurious Pleasure with his Companions, and in high Grandeur? since at this fatal Instant they will all be damp'd, they will be brought low, even to the Dust; and an eternal Scene of Blessedness or Misery will begin, according as we have well used, or abused those Things committed to our Trust. If then we are all hastening to this End, how cautious and careful ought we to be, lest we misplace our Care, and follow too close, what the good Word of God tells us is Vanity, Shadow, and Dream? that our Hope, our Love, and our Trust center all upon God, who is the only durable and satisfactory Object; that we *spend our Money no longer for that which is not Bread, and our Labour for that which satisfies not*; that our Affections sit more loose and disengaged from this World's Goods; that we keep our Eye so fixed by Faith on the incorruptible Crown, and the Glory that shall be revealed, as lightly to regard the Enjoyments of this present Time; to possess what we have, as if we possess'd it not; as Sojourners, who have no durable Concern here below, and with as much Unconcernedness what passes in the Land, as Pilgrims passing thro' it, bound for their own Country, whose present Affair is only to take Care for Refreshments, and tolerable Conveniencies in their Journey; having our Eyes so intent upon Eternity, as not to be mov'd by the Pleasures or Profits of Sin, which
are

are but *for a Season* ; “ thinking nothing which our carnal Eyes can present to us fit to stay, and engage a Soul, that is capable of enjoying God ; nor none of those fading, perishing Objects, as deserving room in that Heart, whose Capacity is Infinity, and which was made for Eternity ;” that we commit no manner of Sin in the Prosecution of our worldly Designs, no not if we were sure to obtain the whole World by it, by Violence or Fraud, by any thing shameful and base ; but to prefer the Ways of our Duty before all other Considerations ; Honesty and Conscience before Gain and Greatness ; considering how unreasonably dear he pays for Enjoyments and Acquests, who pawns his Heaven for them ; and that thus to buy such a short Bliss, is to give not only 20, or 100 Years Purchase, (but if Mercy prevent not) even Eternity ? This will shew whether we profit by the Word preach’d or read, and teach us the true Way to measure our Love and Esteem for these worldly Things, and know whether it be too great and immoderate.

For if we will be guilty of the least Sin or Injustice in getting Riches ; or in possessing them, or rather delivering them out to proper Uses, and not making Restitution of what was got amiss, we plainly love them immoderately, and deem them of more Worth than Virtue, the Soul, or God himself ; and so all the Dissuasives of God’s Word will become unfruitful, while any of us retain this unhappy Disposition.

But on the contrary, if we use those Riches which we have acquir’d honestly, whether more or less, so as to ensure the Possession of them to us forever, by doing what good we can with them ; those Things, which are by Nature perishing, will
last

last for evermore: By this we shall enrich our Minds with most excellent Virtue, and Christian Disposition. In short, we ought to live as a People who should wholly depend upon Heaven, where our Interest and our Treasure is; placing no Confidence in any earthly Support or Comfort; so as to be after another manner than the Generality of the World, Seekers of Riches, Honours, and Pleasures, designing to attain Felicity by disaffecting our Hearts from Esteem of the World, and of those sublunary Things which are vulgarly admir'd, hardly deigning to stoop to take up such Trifles; as who that considers that he is running a Race for a Diamond would stoop to take up Pins: A People that should be Strangers to filthy Lusts, by studying in this Flesh the Life of Angels, that should have no need of Divorce; that we should bear no Disappointments with Terror; to whom to *die*, should be look'd on as *Gain*; and, when Death comes to call us hence, it should find us like *Archimedes* at the Taking of *Syracuse*, that is, contemplating other, and higher Things, and not regarding what becomes of this World and worldly Matters. Such heavenly Cares and Thoughts as these should be more the Subject of our Culture and Meditation, that so the Seed of a better Life, which is so often sown in good Instruction, may be more free of worldly Rubbish, and bear the proper Fruits here in due Season, that at the Day of Judgment, when the Time of Threshing come, we may receive the Rewards in Joy and Life everlasting.

S E R-



For *Quinquagesima* Sunday.

SERMON

The Fourth.

*Necessity of Christian Knowledge, and
the Qualifications for it.*

Luke xviii. Part of 40, 41, ver. and of the
Gospel of the Day.

*And when he was come near him, he asked him,
saying, What wilt thou that I should do unto
thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive
my Sight.*

WE read just before, that a blind
Man by the Way Side, hearing
that *Jesus of Nazareth* was pas-
sing by with the Multitude, cried
very importunately for a Boon of his Mercy; and
the more he was check'd and forbid to call so
loud, the louder he supplicated the merciful *Je-
sus*; to whom his Faith also gave the true Title of
the Son of *David*. Accordingly the Son of *Da-
vid*, whose Ears are open to all Prayers made to
him with Fervency and Faith, commands him,
the Beggar, to be brought, (to whose Kingly
Presence Beggars had, and have as free and as
E. welcome

welcome Access as the Rich and Great) and asks him his Suit; what Instance of Mercy he most desir'd to have bestow'd on him? The blind Man answers, *Lord, that I may receive my Sight*; the greatest Happiness that could be conferr'd on him as to this World. There's no doubt this Man was not born blind, for then he had been insensible of his Calamity; as in the 9th of St. *John's* Gospel, our Saviour voluntarily cures such a one, who was blind from his Birth, to manifest his Power, without any Request from the Man himself, who was ignorant that he wanted any such Faculty as seeing. This Man therefore being so sensible of his Misfortune of Blindness, which likewise reduced him to that begging Condition, it must have happen'd to him by some Misfortune, which made him so desirous to recover his Eye-sight again; and we find his Petition was immediately granted, by reason of the Strength of his Faith. Our blessed Lord seems to deal somewhat differently with another blind Man mentioned in *Mark* viii. 22. &c. whom he did not cure all at once so presently, but Piece-meal, and by Degrees; first, so as to see Men walk like Trees, before he saw clearly; and this with the Application of Clay and Spittle too, which was probably done so leisurely, because the Patient had some doubting in his Belief. But the Man in the Text doubted nothing, but firmly believ'd him to be the Messiah, who was to be of the House and Lineage of *David*, and that the Prophets had given it as one Mark and Signification of the Messiah, that the Blind should receive their Sight; which was intended, and which was accomplish'd, in a two-fold respect, as well in the Matter of spiritual Blindness, as that which was corporal, by our Lord Christ. The opening the Eyes of the Body was a visible Emblem, as well as a good Reason,

for

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for the opening the Eyes of their Understanding : Yet strange it was ! the curing the Man that was born blind had no such Effect on the Scribes and Pharisees, who should have been as Eyes to the People : The wondrous Miracle opened not their Eyes ; as the blind Man himself, who was recovered, upbraids their Unbelief, with Admiration of their Spiritual Blindness (now greater than his bodily one was a while before.) *Herein, says he, is a marvellous Thing, that ye know not whence he is ! Was it ever known since the Foundation of the World, that the Sight of one born blind was ever recovered before this Time ? &c.*

Most certainly it was the Business of our Blessed Lord and Saviour, who brought Light and Immortality to Light, to open the Eyes of all Mankind ; the Eyes, I mean, of the Mind and Understanding, which had been shut in Darkness, or saw dimly by obscure Light, ever since the Devil falsely told our first Parents, that they shou'd be open to know Good and Evil, by eating of the forbidden Tree. Since then, Sin has drawn a Cloud over the Understanding, and entangled it not a little in Error, Confusion, and Dispute ; and greatly intercepted the Soul's Commerce with the God of Truth ; and ever since, Knowledge, its necessary Food, is to be acquired with Pains, Assiduity and Carefulness. But Thanks be to God our Saviour, that Knowledge of holy Truth and Duty, which is necessary for it, is much easier to be obtain'd, since the Sun of Righteousness has risen with the luminous Splendor of Divine Information : Yet still it requires some Pains, some Attention and Consideration ; and I wish it was not a great deal more than the Generality bestow in order to attain it. We are apt to compassionate those that are born blind ; but the Blindness of the Mind, which I am sure we are not born to, is a

far greater Evil: One deprives of some of the Comforts of the present Life, the other of that which is to come, which is eternal; in regard of that, to be in the dark in whatever is needful, is the greatest Infelicity that can befall a Man; nay, is as great a Fault as he can well be guilty of, if he has Means and Opportunity of knowing, and of having his Senses exercised to discern between Good and Evil; since the minding the Things of another Life, and the living for it, is the principal End of our being sent into this. But that which makes Blindness in Spiritual Matters the more deplorable, as well as the harder to be cur'd, is this unhappy Circumstance, the Persons who labour under it seldom or never discern it in themselves: As it is a hard thing to convince a blind-born Man that he wants a Faculty which other People have; so those other Ignorants are with Difficulty, if at all, persuaded from thinking, that they already know enough of the Ways and Measures of their Duty; and in this Persuasion, while they imagine themselves somebody, and sufficiently knowing, they know nothing yet as they ought to know: And this is the general Cause of Ignorance in the Laws and Covenant of Christianity, that most People take themselves to be more knowing therein, than really they are. So few are willing to suspect themselves in the least wanting in that Knowledge that is requisite to make them happy, that Numbers there are voluntarily ignorant in the Affairs of Religion; and so dim-sighted in spiritual Objects, as if they had either no Concern about, or no Discernment for them; even in a Christian Country, where the Word is nigh in their Mouth and their Ears; where the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity are perpetually pressed and explain'd; Line upon Line, Precept upon Precept, here a little and there

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there a little: And the whole Land (as *Isaiab* foresaw of the *Messiah's* Days) is filled with the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea, and every one may know him and his Christ, and what we have to do to be saved, from the least to greatest. Wisdom and Instruction also, in the Phrase the wisest Preacher, utter their Voice in the chief Places of Concourse; in an infinite Multitude likewise of religious Books. For a reasonable Creature under such Circumstances to give himself up to an insensible Stupidity, in an Affair of the utmost Concern, must it not be a heinous Crime? And so much the greater Reproach, as it is true in Fact, that some of the meaner Sort, of no greater Leisure, nor different Faculties of Mind, have by their Sundays Diligence, thro' the Helps that were in their Power, raised their Minds to a good Apprehension and considerable Knowledge of the Principles and Parts of Religion, its Nature and Design. Yet under these great and numerous Advantages of Knowledge, how many pass the Time of their Sojourning here in Supineness of Soul, as to any right Information of what is acceptable to God? How many have not the Knowledge of God? (I speak this to their Shame) not only among the poor labouring and illiterate Part of Mankind, who are diverted and harrass'd by the Necessities of this Life, and unqualify'd by the Slowness of their Understanding to arrive at any great Perfection of Knowledge, but even some of more Capacity and Leisure, who are perfectly circumspect and quick-sighted beyond their Fellows in the Affairs of this mortal Life?

If one was to discourse the Generality upon Religion, he wou'd be more surprized than he at present imagines, to find them discover such Unapprehension, and Inadvertence of Soul even in the plain Truths, Doctrines, and Principles of

Christianity ; as I believe most Divines who attend sick Beds find but too much of it. This thoughtless Unattention of Mind, in the midst of so much Illumination, is, in any Rank of People, a Sin against their own Soul, and like unto a wilful chusing Darkness when Light is come into the World, ready to open their very Eyes, if the easy Lethargy of Ignorance did not return upon them, and close them up again as soon as a little awakened out of Sleep. But since there are such abundant Opportunities of knowing what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God, it is strange you should want Arguments to display unto you the Necessity, Excellency, and Benefits of such a Knowledge and the Ways to it. *If I had not come and spoken to them, says our Saviour, they had not had Sin, but now they have no Cloak for it.* It will be no Manner of Excuse at the Day of Judgment, that any one acted according to the best of his Understanding, except he has also us'd his best Endeavour, by all means, according to his Opportunities, to understand the Will of God, and the Law he was to keep, and be judg'd by. The Ignorance of God's Will and Word, which is so culpable and sadly chargeable upon abundance of People, is that which is careless, supine, or obstinate : Of which what can be the Occasion, but that which the Apostle assigns? *The God of this World blinds their Eyes* ; they chuse so to give up themselves Body and Soul, the Service of all their Senses and Faculties, to the Love and Drudgery of this Life, that they have no Comprehension left for the invisible Things of another, which lie so quite different and remote from the Affairs and Pursuits of Things that are seen ; so it comes to pass that when they read or hear spiritual Truths, there is a contracted Film as it were over their Eye,

Eye, and a Veil over their Heart, and both, alas! of their own drawing and occasioning. And thus they go on in their Wickedness, like the Horse and Mule that have no Understanding, looking like them continually downwards, and have not an effectual Thought above this Earth and the Things before them; having their Understanding darkened (as *St. Paul* expresses it,) being alienated from the Life of God thro' the Ignorance that is in them, because of the Blindness of their Hearts.

That none of us therefore may (any longer) lie under this voluntary shameful Imperception of, or Unattention to sacred Truths, and so ill deserve the Light that shines unto us; that we may have at least one Eye open and discerning in the Discoveries and Concerns of a future World, while the other is so fixt and intelligent in the Affairs of this; that we be no more such Strangers and Novices in the Things that supremely import us, the Wisdom that is so necessary and becoming of us, in Comparison of which all other Knowledge and Erudition is but as an Ornament or a pleasing Amusement;

I wou'd be permitted, in the first Place, to endeavour, by some Considerations, to excite your Desires, and quicken your Cares after spiritual Knowledge, that we may be as desirous of having the Eyes of our Mind opened, as this blind Man was those of his Body.

And then, in the 2d and last Place, I will recommend some generally necessary Qualifications for the better attaining and improving in this Knowledge.

First, I am to excite your Desires and Cares after this Knowledge in divine Matters. And this I wou'd do, in the first Place, from the Consideration of the Necessity of it. Now the Necessity thereof is apparent at first Consideration,

since we cannot do our Master's Will before we know it ; nor expect his Favour but by studying those Things that are well-pleasing in his Sight. How can a Man exercise himself to have a Conscience void of Offence towards God and Man, if not informed what are his respective Duties and Obligations to each? And since God has for that Reason laid those Things so plain and open in his holy Revelations of Scripture before us, we must not expect to be beaten with *the few Stripes*, but with the *many*, since we might know, and would not. The Fault of not knowing will in this Case be far greater than that of not doing, because the Fault is equally in ourselves, and is moreover the Cause of the other, and as wilful as the other can be, wilful Ignorance being full as great a Fault as wilful Disobedience. Suppose a Father has two Sons, and bids them go and do such a Thing ; one with all Reverence and Obedience hearkens to his Voice, and promises his Endeavour to do it ; the other stops his Ears and will not so much as listen to his Commands or the Ways of pleasing him, because resolved never to perform them : Which of these two, think you, is most undutiful ? So in Respect of our Father in Heaven, they that will not so hearken and attend as to understand his Voice, may walk on still in Darkness, Sin, Rebellion, and ruinous Ignorance. How can we perform Duty without knowing the Measures of it, or keep the Law without having Understanding in it ? Hence the Psalmist so earnestly prayed, that the Lord would give him Understanding in the Way of Godliness ; and elsewhere gives this Reason why the People erred and strayed in their Hearts, because, as it follows, they have *not known my Ways*.

The Understanding is the Guide and Superintendent of the Will, and all our Faculties and Powers;
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the Arbiter, Judge and Dictator of all our Actions. If the Light then that is in us be Darknes, how great indeed is that Darknes? If the Eyes of this internal Guide be out, or see the Way but dimly, how shall we not fall into the Precipices of Wick-
edness, and Pits of eternal Destruction? The Want of Desire after this needful Knowledge is such a Disease in the Soul, as Want of Appetite in the Body, and more dangerous: For what a wretched Condition is that Person in, when that Part of him which constitutes him chiefly a Man, and sets him above the Beasts that perish, is stifled, is mutilated and impoverish'd almost to their Level? Seeing he has a Soul as well as a Body, one of which is as capable of conversing with God and Heaven, with Truth and moral Goodness and Perfection, as the other is of conversing with this World of visible Objects; we cannot but conclude, that to be destitute of Knowledge and Faith, of Hope and Love, is more injurious to the true Life of Man than to be deaf or blind; and that a Stupidity or Lethargy in the Soul, such as renders it insensible to rational Pleasures, is as pernicious in the true Life of Man, as a Lethargy or dead Palsy in the Body; and to be excluded from Commerce with the invisible World, is as fatal to it as to be debarred the visible one by corporal Blindness. Such is their Misfortune, they must see by other Peoples Eyes, when they might as well have seen by their own; they must live by Rote, and by the Example of others, without knowing the Reason of their Actions; they must take up their Religion upon Trust, as a Property belonging to their Country, or Parents, or Family, which they happen to belong to; without having any rational Grounds for their Faith, or being able, if ask'd, to give a Reason of the Hope that is in them: And so
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must become the easier Prey for those who lie in wait to deceive. That the Soul therefore should be without Knowledge is not good, says the Scripture; but he that getteth it, *loveth his own Soul.*

For even in Things of Practice, agreed to on all Hands, Men will fall into fatal Errors, if they do not as far as they are able endeavour to inform themselves rightly, and frame true Notions concerning both God, themselves, and their Neighbour, to whom these Duties are owing; and also of all those Things which are the Subjects of any of them, and in the true Management whereof such Duties do consist: For if one is mistaken in his Judgment concerning either of these, he must of Necessity take wrong Measures in his Actions towards them. Thus, for Example, if he shou'd not believe and consider God as eternal, every where present, most good, wise, powerful, just, &c. it wou'd not be possible for him to love, honour, fear, trust, obey him in that Degree that he ought. And if we don't always remember ourselves to be frail Creatures, subject to Passions and Infirmities, of a short Continuance here, and that we were sent into this World to sojourn for a little Time, to be train'd up and disciplin'd for Eternity and a future State; and that whatever Excellency we may seem to have, we derive it wholly from God and his good Providence, and not from ourselves; we shall never be able, so effectually as we ought, to govern our Passions, and restrain our Affections from the Things of this World, and pursue that End for which God has design'd us. And if we do not know and consider that other Men (whatever accidental Difference there may be between us) are equal to us in Nature, that their Souls are as precious in God's Sight as ours, that *Christ* died for 'em

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as much as for us, &c. we shall not be inclin'd to behave ourselves to them with that Justice, Charity and Humility which do evidently appear to be our Duty. And, lastly, if we do not frame a true Notion of the Vanity of the Things of this World, and the Excellency of the Joys of Heaven, we shall never be able to prefer the latter before the former in such a Measure as we ought to do.

And then, as a Christian, a Man is farther bound to know and understand the Priviledges he was enter'd into by Baptism, especially the Promises and Engagements of Faith, of Repentance, and Obedience, and the several Subjects and Objects of each of them. Else how shall he value the first, or keep and observe the latter, which were stipulated to be kept and observed on his Part? If he do not acquaint himself of the Benefits received, the Obligations and Relations he stands bound in to each Person of the blessed Trinity, whose Name he is baptiz'd into, how shall he shew forth their Praise, and devote the Service of his Life to them? Or how inflame his Heart with Love and Gratitude to his dear Redeemer, for his inestimable Love; and the Necessity of partaking often in those Memorials which he has blessed and instituted; if he do not read, hear, and ponder what mighty things he has done and suffered for us? Or how frame and fashion his Life according to the Model of his Example proposed to all Christians, if he do not study, meditate upon, and pursue the Pattern laid down in the sacred Pages of the New Testament? Finally, if he do not apprehend the spiritual Enemies he is engaged with, the Devil, the Flesh, and the World, and what Armour to put on, and what Defence to make against them; if he do not believe and know the Corruption of human Nature; and consequently the Necessity, the Promise, of supernatural Assistance of the Holy Ghost;

Ghost; how shall he supplicate and depend upon the Aids, the Comforts and Communications of it?

These are the plain and necessary Truths of the Religion of *Jesus*, which are as necessary to be known by every Disciple that names his Name, as they are to be complied with in the Suitableness of our Practice; and which none can safely be ignorant of, without the utmost Danger to his Soul; but all may attain unto, because it requires no great Parts or Scholarship, and no more Time and Diligence to learn than what is perfectly consistent with their earthly Concerns; if, as I formerly insisted, they would but duely employ that Portion of Time weekly in the grand Care and Improvement of their Soul, which exempts them from the Labour of the Body: If they wou'd but attend the publick Ordinances of Instruction duely, and give Diligence to read, and pray, and meditate at Home, and not mispend the precious Sabbath in impertinent Occupations, which, to spend well to the nurturing of their Soul, is of more Importance to them than the Labour of the other six Days. And I therefore now recommend to you, and am confident you would receive great Benefit thereby, that plain excellent Book, called, *The whole Duty of Man*, being purposely divided into Portions for the Employment of Sundays.

I say, such general Truths as these are the Outlines and main Branches which every Christian ought to go on, improve in the Notice of, and to be very conversant in, as the Principles and Rules he is to walk by; they are excellently summ'd up in our Catechism, that Form of sound Words which is not only Food for Babes, but for the Strongest to digest, and which can never be too well understood by the oldest and wisest amongst us.

God

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God has, by Way of Trust, conferred upon us a Capacity for understanding divine Things, and put divine Writings out to interest to us. Whoever he is of low Condition, let him be but faithful in exerting his Abilities, or his one Talent, (and not to do so thro' Sloth, is in the Parable branded and punish'd as a wicked Servant :) Let him on Sundays, if not other Spaces of Time, bend his Diligence, for that Purpose unbent from other Things by God and the Laws, in so reading and hearing the Word of God read, in so attending to Exhortations and the other holy Ordinances of the Christian Life, as to repent him of his Sins, and express his Love and Fear of God by keeping his Laws better ; and depend upon him Day by Day in Prayer and Thanksgiving, thro' Faith in *Christ*, for all that is needful both to his Soul and Body ; love this World less, as one that looks for his Happiness in another, and be so impress'd with a lively Assurance of a future Account, as to be careful of keeping his Conscience void of Offence towards God and Man : And if the meanest Capacities can, as they easily may, compass this Knowledge and bear the Fruits of it without Hindrance to their Temporal Business, Religion is in them also as well as others a reasonable Service : And thus laying out their best and whole Abilities, God, who is the Ordainer of the Distinctions of Life, expects no more from them.

These are the Heads of divine and heavenly Knowledge contained in your Catechism, which we hold necessary for every one to be particularly instructed in the Meaning and Influence they ought to have over us. We press you not to an Acquaintance with disputable Points, nor trouble you with obstruse ones, nor desire you to trouble yourselves, such as Predestination, Election, &c.
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(which are likelier to fill the Head with Wind and Enthusiasm than substantial Knowledge, meet to conduct us in the Way of Life which we should walk in; for God does not call Men to Happiness by difficult Questions:) Tho' we cou'd even wish, with *Moses*, that all the Lord's People were Prophets. So far are we from envying you Knowledge, that we would display and invite you to it all that we are able. We have no secular Ends to serve (like the *Romish Church*) by keeping you in Ignorance of the true State of spiritual Truth. The skilfuller you were in trying the Prophets, in the Law and the Testimony as to these Things, the more satisfied you would be in your present Profession. You cannot do us a greater Pleasure and Comfort than to be more and more conversant in the blessed Scriptures, which is your Birth-right; for then should you profit so much the more by our Preaching; and we could build you up and repair you with the greater Success and Facility in your holy Profession, if you were perfectly acquainted with the heavenly Materials. Oh! did you but converse enough with those heavenly Pages which the Worthy and the Unworthy may read, but the wise, and the good, and the honest Heart will understand; for in them is the Spring of Understanding, the Fountain of Wisdom, and the Stream of Knowledge: In them would you meet (if you so desir'd) the Spirit of God that dictated and indited them; and he wou'd there meet himself again in the Eyes or the Hearts of the Hearers or Readers, as we meet ourselves in a Glass. Therein we should see ourselves and our manifold Blemishes and Defects, if we inspected attentively, and how to cure and redress them: We should likewise visibly see our own Ignorance, which is one of the usefulest Lessons

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we can find; and the Necessity of Wisdom and Knowledge, and the various pressing and repeated Obligation it puts us under, to search, mind, grow, improve and encrease therein. Yea, innumerable are the Texts that speak and exhort to this Effect; and surely what makes up so great a Part of the Holy Volume, deserves more Care and Thought from us than is generally laid out about the important Work, and may convince us that it is not so indifferent a Thing as the meaner Sort of People are apt to imagine, whether they know little or much. Let me only instance a few out of such Abundance.

As, Be ye not unwise; but understanding what the Will of the Lord is, that ye may be ready always to give an Answer of the Hope that is in you. We who are arrived at the Age of Maturity, are permitted by Scripture to be Children in nothing but Innocence and Teachableness; but in Understanding to be Men, to be able to give an Answer of the Reason of the Hope that is in us. *Apply then thy Heart to know, and to search, and seek out Wisdom and the Reason of Things, and to know the Wickedness of Folly, even of Foolishness and Madness; so shalt thou behave thyself wisely in all thy Ways. Take fast hold of Instruction, attend to the Words of Wisdom, keep them in the midst of thy Heart; then shalt thou understand Righteousness and Judgment, and every good Path.* So are we bid to keep sound Wisdom and Discretion, and they will be Life to the Soul, and Grace to the Neck, and we shall walk safely, and our Foot not stumble: To enquire of the former Age, and prepare our selves for the Search of the Fathers: To give Attendance to Reading, to Exhortation, to Doctrine. If any Man hath Ears to hear, let him hear. We are to believe not every Spirit, but to try them; to prove all things,

things, chuse the Way of Truth, and hold fast that which is good; and not to be carried about with divers kind of Doctrines. Understanding, we are told, is a Well-spring of Life to them that have it, and that Fools die for Want of Wisdom; and *Isaiab* assigns it as the Reason why the People would be carried into Captivity, because they had no Knowledge. That was their national Crime; and for that Cause Hell had enlarged herself, and open'd her Mouth without Measure, as he goes on. And the Wise Man, not unlike him, *Weep for the Dead, for he hath lost the Light, and weep for the Fool, for he wanteth Understanding! Make little weeping for the Dead, for he is at rest, but the Life of a Fool is worse than Death.* Would you more largely know the Invaluableness, the Price and Excellency of Wisdom, read the 28th Chapter of *Job*, the 1, 2, and 4th Chapter of *Proverbs*. With what Thirst and Desire is she to be sought and dug for, rather than Silver or any other precious Thing; which is but as Dung in Comparison with the other? The Thought thereof, makes the wise Man complain, *Why is there a Price in the Hand of a Fool to get Wisdom, seeing he hath no Heart to it?* And a great many Wishes, and Prayers, and Recommendations of Knowledge do we meet with in the Law and Commandments, in the Psalmist and the Prophets. And the two Apochryphal Books of *Wisdom* and *Ecclesiasticus* are almost wholly taken up in setting out Characters and Descriptions of Wisdom, the Encouragements and Motives to pursue it, or the Preparations requisite to attain it. To what else serve so many Passages but to prove demonstrably what I have been recommending, the Usefulness and Necessity of divine Knowledge? Which lays us all under indispensable Obligations of advancing in it; and renders our

Ignorance

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Ignorance sinful and inexcusable in Matters of necessary Edification.

I have purposely declin'd those Topicks and Arguments by which I formerly and more urgently set out our Obligations of growing in spiritual Knowledge, because I wou'd be adding some farther Strength to them; and because since that, upon another Occasion, I enlarged also upon the proper Season of instilling this Knowledge first into our early Youth. And now it remains only, before I put an End to this Discourse, to add something more also of the requisite Qualifications to acquire this Knowledge. For if there is a wrong Method, or Obstructions in the Way, we shall labour in vain.

The 1st I shall mention is, that we have a sincere Desire and Resolution to use and improve our divine Knowledge in a right Manner and to a right End: To practise what we already know; and then more will be added to us, even all that is convenient. Of this there are a great many Directions and Assurances in Scripture, as, if you desire Wisdom, *keep the Commandment and the Lord will give it*; and the *Secret of the Lord is with the Righteous*; and if *any Man will do his Will, he shall be knowing in the Doctrine whether of God or not*. This is the Method St. Paul chalks out, *Add to your Faith Virtue, and to Virtue Knowledge, &c.* first Virtue as Qualification; then Knowledge; for as much as if these things are in us and abound, they will make us not barren or unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; so shall we not have the Abuse of Understanding, so excellent an Advantage, to answer for, if our Practice does but keep pace and not shamefully contradict it.

2. The next Requisite is, that we have Desires after it ardent and earnest, answerable to the Use
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and Dignity of the Thing : As the blind Man in the Text would not be rebuked so as to hold his Peace, but cried and besought so much the more that he might have his Eye-sight ; so neither should we suffer any Thing to discourage our Aspirings after a better Sight of Things ; not the Flouts or the Jeers of the Multitude, nor the Taunts of Men more vile and brutish ; considering the Woe and the Adversity upon us if we know not the Truths of the Gospel divulged for that Purpose ; and the Danger and Damnation that would accrue, if we slight the Knowledge of God's Ways ; that the Ignorance of them is the Scripture kind of Blindness and Affliction that can happen to a Christian. Knowledge in these Matters is like Health ; if it is not our own to enjoy, we are not the better for it. If these our Desires do not go before, the Endeavours after it will be but cool and slack ; and as these succeed, the other will kindle more and more. We must (as the wise Man advises) stick at no Price to purchase her which is beyond Price and Jewels ; nor baulk the Pains that she will put us to ; then will she meet half Way, and come and take up her Dwelling with that Person. Nay, she preventeth them that desire her, in making herself first known unto them ; if they seek her early, they will find her sitting at their Doors : And again, come unto her as one that *ploweth and soweth*, and *wait for her good Fruits*, for thou shalt not toil much in labouring about her, but thou shalt eat of her Fruits right soon : Come unto her with thy whole Heart, and keep her Ways with all thy Power.

There is besides the more Attention required in these spiritual Apprehensions, because the Minds of the Generality lie under great moral Indispositions, by being bowed down and warpt so much

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so this World, that they are perpetually apt "to start and fly off from such Considerations of a Nature so little grateful to their present Sense."

Another, and 3d Qualification, very necessary to prepare and dispose People for Knowledge, is Humility. This is what must render the Mind teachable. "It is the Property of all true Knowledge, especially spiritual, to enlarge the Soul by filling it; to make it more capable and earnest to know, the more it knows. Even in natural Things, whoever pretends to have learned so much, that he neither has Need, nor Will, to learn more, he has never learned any thing right; and if this be so in natural Things, in which the Instruments and Helps of our Knowledge are weak, and the Objects of it finite; how much more is it so in divine Things, in which the Instruments, the Helps, the Objects, the Benefits of our Knowledge are infinite? In divine Things to be always teachable, to be always learning, is not only the most certain Way to divine Wisdom, but even a good Degree of divine Wisdom itself." But on the contrary, to be conceited that we know enough already, is a manifest Testimonial of our Ignorance, and it renders incapable, because disdainful and careless of further Counsel or Improvement. *A Man wise in his own Conceit, there is much more hopes of a Fool than of him,* says the wisest of Men. Seeing they fancy themselves to be wise, why should they dispossess themselves of that pleasing Enjoyment by endeavouring to know more, which would certainly be so troublesome as to let them understand they know far less than they imagined, just nothing? This over-weening Opinion, very common amongst the Illiterate, is the Reason that so many are found obstinate, peevish, morose, secure, presumptuous towards God and Man, judging

ing every thing, and mending every thing, by their Model and Scantling. Till this pernicious Disposition is laid aside, against which a Woe is denounc'd as an Enemy to Peace, Order, and all Instruction in Good, there is no Improvement to be hop'd for in either.

In the 4th and last Place, to make the other successful, we must follow the Model of the Text, and join Prayer and Supplication to Almighty God, according to the Commandment: *If any Man lack Wisdom let him ask it of God*; that he wou'd please to open our Eyes to behold the wondrous Things of his Law; as the blind Man in the Text besought *Jesus* to open his fleshly Eyes; that God would lighten our Darknes, remove our Ignorance, and every Prejudice and unreasonable Love of this World, which mightily clouds the Mind and hinders its clear Perception of the Things of God; that by the Guidance of his Spirit he would lead us into all necessary Truth, granting us (as in the concluding Prayer of *St. Chrysostom*) "in this World Knowledge of his Truth, in the World to come Life everlasting"; that so Wisdom and Knowledge may, in the Prophet's Wish, be the Stability of our Times, and the Fear of the Lord our Treasure and Defence. So I take up and desire the Prayers of *St. Paul* for all here present, for all that are called by the Name of *Christ*, ceasing not as he assures the *Colossians*, when he writ to them, to pray for them; and to desire that you may be filled with Knowledge of his Will in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding; that you walk worthy of the Lord, to all well-pleasing, being fruitful in every good Work, encreasing in the Knowledge of God; and, as here in my Text, that the God of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the Father of Glory, may give to each the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation

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Revelation in the Knowledge of him; that the Eyes of their Understanding being opened, they may know what is the Hope of their Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of their Inheritance with the Saints, for the Sake of *Jesus Christ*.



~~THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT~~
The first Sunday in *Lent*.

S E R M O N

The Fifth.

*The Usefulness of Temptations, &c.
and some Directions concerning
them.*

MATTH. iv. 1. which begins the Gospel of
the Day.

*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the Wilder-
ness, to be tempted of the Devil.*

IT has been a Question long ago started by
the Opposers of our Lord *Jesus's* Divinity,
and improv'd of late by the *Socinians*, why
he should submit himself to be tempted of
the Devil; seeing his Divine Nature set him
above the Power of the Devil and his Angels,
and all Possibility of being vanquish'd by him? Or
supposing the Devil assaulted him only as Man,
how superfluous was it to shew that his human
Nature, strengthen'd and assisted by the personal
Union of the Divine, should be able to defeat the
Attacks of *Satan*? Certainly in such Circum-
stances any Degree of Success against him was im-

The Usefulness of Temptations, &c. 71

impracticable: All the Temptations and Solicitations of the Devil must have been in vain against a Saviour peculiarly exempt from Original Sin, different from all others born of a Woman; agreeable to what he says of himself, *John xiv. 30. The Prince of this World cometh, and hath no Part in me.* Nothing in his pure Nature for a delusive Temptation to get an Advantage over: Yet it is not the first Time Satan's Malice instigated him to attempt an Impossibility, as when he would have set himself up to be like the Most High, which occasioned his Downfall and Preservation in Chains; tho' some have conjectured that our Blessed Lord's Divinity, and his being born of a Virgin, was at that Time a Secret to the Devil, (as being such mysterious Things, that the Angels themselves desired to look into) and that he therefore accosted the Holy Jesus only as a Person dear to God. This however is certain; the Scripture acquaints us with the great and wise Ends of our Saviour sustaining this Conflict with the grand Enemy and Tempter of Mankind, as the Apostle, *Heb. ii. 17, 18.* lets us know, *that in all Things it becometh him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest; for as that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* And again, in *Ch. iv. 15, 16.* *We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin; let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need.* From which Passages, without recourse to any other, we are warranted to collect these manifest Ends, and weighty Inducements of our Lord's Temptation, which is at this Season recommended to our

Meditation; namely, in order both for our Imitation, and our Consolation.

I. For our Imitation; it absolutely behov'd him, who is *the Captain of our Salvation*, to become a Pattern of Conduct to us, to lead and animate us by his own Example, that he might teach us to be like himself, more than Conquerors over this implacable Enemy of our Soul; by shewing us the holy Methods of repelling his Assaults, and baffling his Efforts against us. And that which renders our Leader so much the more imitable by us, in all Particulars of the Combat, is, that he conquered by the very same Means and Weapons which are in our Hands, and in our Power to make use of: Not by Virtue of the invincible Divinity residing in him, which by the wisest and earliest of the Antients was thought to be passive, and quiescent in all this Affair, but by the Holy Spirit by which he was anointed; and therefore, as we may be Partakers of the *same Spirit* that was in him, and which is greater than *that Spirit which is in the World*, we may also, like him, master and subdue the spiritual Adversary by the same Assistance, and by the same Way of Defence; to wit, that of having recourse to the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, wherewith to answer each Temptation that assails our Virtue, with a defeating *thus and thus it is written* to the contrary. This is one principal Improvement we ought to draw from the History and the Example before us.

A IId End of our Saviour Christ's being tempted, is, that we might all extract Consolation and Encouragement from the Consideration of the Victory he obtained in our human Nature. What ought more to animate our Hope, invigorate our
Courage,

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Courage, and take away all Despondency from the Apprehensions of such an enraged Enemy, active and powerful, tho' implacably bent on our Ruin; who yet has been baffled and defeated by that very human Nature, which he had triumph'd over before? By Man came Slavery to *Satan*; so by Man came as compleat a Victory over him. To all those that are desirous of Freedom and Victory, he is rendered conquerable, even to the Frailties and Infirmities of Flesh and Blood, by means of the Man Christ *Jesus*, who put them on to instruct us how to war, and how to win the Day in them; so that we have nothing to do but to engage with a Foe already routed; and take we but Care to follow our Captain's Steps and Directions, we may assure ourselves of Conquest. For (which is another Matter of Joy and Consolation) tho' the conquering Nature of him, which led *Captivity captive*, and to which we are allied in Flesh and Bones, Passions and Constitution, is removed far above, out of our Sight, to the Right Hand of God, to be ever-mindful of us; the Fellow-feeling and Remembrance of the Danger and Burthen of Temptation, which he carried up with him, will ever incline him to compassionate and assist us in all our Difficulties. He drank of the same Cup in the Way, and therefore will he lift up our Head, whilst on Earth: He prayed the Father that *St. Peter's* Faith might not fail, when assaulted by the approaching Trial: And now in Heaven he ever lives to make the like Intercession for us; and for that Reason he has emboldened us to apply to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need.

IIIIdly, Another very good Reason why our Lord submitted his Integrity and Holiness to a State

State of Trial and Temptation, may be to teach us all, that no Degree of Perfection or Attainments in Virtue, no, not in the highest Saint upon Earth, sets him free from the Assaults of Temptation; none must expect they will cease, as long as there is Malice in the Devil, or we inhabit these Tenements of Flesh and Frailty, which always, more or less, administer some Occasion against us for the Devil to lay hold on to our Disadvantage. And this should guard us from Presumption and Security, seeing there is no End of Danger from some Temptation or other, till there is an End put to our mortal Life; for 'tis the Devil's Affair in chief to pursue the Wise and Good with double Diligence and Spite, who are upon the Watch against him, and declare War, and maintain their Hostility and Defence against his Devices. As for the Wicked and Careless, he has no Occasion to wage a Conflict with them, who are already so much his devoted Friends and Servants, and submit quietly to his Rule, in the Spirit of Slumber and Security. Neither must our Lord's best Disciples, (since he himself was not in the Wilderness) in their Religious Retirements expect to be totally free from the Suggestions of the wicked one; but must even in their Devotions and holy Meditations guard against that Alienation and Distraction of Thought, and other spiritual Blemishes, which he is ready at hand to promote, as also to lay a Scene for all those Vices which are peculiar to Solitude and Privacy. In particular, the Time of our Saviour's being tempted, which the Text implies under the Word *then*, and refers immediately to that after his Baptism, instructs us, in like manner, to prepare for the fiercest Assaults, when we have been partaking of the Sacrament, or performing other Acts of religious Worship, for the fortifying our Souls
most

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most against him. All this is to be expected as the Effect of his Rage, and disappointed Wrath against us, for having gained Ground upon him: But as long as his Efforts will all prove impotent, through the Help of our God, and our own wary Conduct, and be only a Matter of our Triumph and Reward hereafter; let none who set their Hearts aright to serve God, and imitate their Saviour, be discouraged at it; but rather be appriz'd of it before-hand; remembering the Advice and Premonition of the wise Man, *Eccclus ii. 1, &c. My Son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thyself for Temptation; set thy Heart aright, and constantly endure. And a little after, Wo unto him that is faint-hearted; for he believeth not; therefore shall he not be defended.* Gold is tried in the Fire; and sound, acceptable Men, in the Furnace of Adversity.

Before we take into Consideration some proper Rules of Conduct in the midst of so many Temptations that surround us, I would, in the

1st Place, proceed to an Enquiry that it concerns us all to be satisfied in; namely, the Wisdom and Goodness of Providence in suffering us to be tempted. For if God ordains those very Things which become Temptations to Men, and permits us to fall into them, and so many do in Fact fall and miscarry by them, it may seem to be an Imputation on his Goodness, as if he will'd the Falling and the Death of Sinners; or on his Holiness, as if he was an Accessory to, or Occasion of their Guilt, and therefore punish'd Men for what himself had brought upon them. Now, to clear up this Matter in a few Words, let it

1. Be noted, that there is no other Way of preserving us in that free Choice and Liberty of Will, which constitutes us the Creatures we are, free and

and rational, but by permitting of Temptations ; for if we have not the Choice of Evil as well as Good, we are no longer free : Now Evil and Sin are never chosen by Man for their own sakes, as such, but for some courting Allurements of imaginary Good that recommends itself to our Approbation. Temptations therefore being the Subject, the very Test and Opportunity of our Choice and Deliberation are necessary to be continued. The Power is still in ourselves whether we will abuse this noble Privilege given to us, or use it well and wisely ; *Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing, are set before us*, that we may freely chuse and refuse which we please.

2dly, Let it be carefully observ'd, that whatever assaults us of that Nature, either Objects from without, or Sollicitations from within, or the Artifices of *Satan* working upon both, are all but *Temptations*, and no more, *i. e.* they may in-
tice and importune, they may invite and persuade, they may insinuate and urge us to a Compliance, but they can do no more ; they have done their utmost, they cannot force, they cannot compel us : As in the Instance before us the Devil could, by the Permission of God, take our Saviour, and set him on the Pinnacle of the Temple ; he could persuade him to throw himself down ; he could mangle and distort Scripture from its true Scope and Context, which is belying the Truth, and misquoting the Rule of Duty, in order to effect it ; but he could not force the Fallacy upon him, nor oblige him to credit the Falshood. As long as his fallacious Insinuations are detectable by the Power and Clearness of plain Truth, they are easily avoidable, without incurring the least Harm. So in his Dealings with us, notwithstanding our corrupt Inclinations, we have it in our Power not to consent ; and we may
strengthen

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strengthen this natural Ability, weak in itself, with Power and Grace from above, so as utterly to reject every Proposal to withdraw us from our Duty. All then depends upon ourselves, whether these Temptations shall turn to our Harm, or to our Benefit; they may prove Occasions of our Vice, so may they likewise of our Virtue; and consequently be as instrumental to our Happiness and Reward, as to our Misery and Punishment; and they are no otherwise Causes of our Sin, than as our Mismanagement and Neglect renders them so. The Riches that God bestows, are they not by ill Use to one Man, as a Camel to the Needle's Eye, an Obstruction to his Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven? To another, who manages them as he ought, they may prove a happy Occasion of greatly promoting his Salvation, and open a more abundant Passage into the everlasting Habitation. So the Afflictions dispensed to one Man serve to brighten his Virtue, by manifesting forth his Patience and Meekness, his Faith and Stedfastness: To another they prove the Occasion of murmuring and Despair, and only aggravate his Guilt and Crimes, by his own Default. So that what is capable of being converted to so much Good, ought to be interpreted as intended and laid before us by our God for our Good; and every one must therefore acquit him, and deny with St. James, that when *any one is tempted he is tempted of God; for God tempteth no Man to Sin, neither indeed can be.*

But 3dly, instead of blaming his Providence, we shall rejoice if we reflect in the next Place, that there could be no such Thing as Virtue without Trial and Temptation. That supposes a state of Difficulty, Danger, and Opposition, to make it what it is, Virtue, either valuable, or so rewardable as it is in the Sight of God. Innocence

cence may indeed be preserv'd before a Temptation offers to corrupt it; but if it maintains itself afterwards, when attacked fiercely, then it becomes active Virtue, and is to be accounted glorious and commendable; and therefore the stronger and more engaging to Sense and Appetite those Motions and Seducements to Evil were, and the longer we persevere in resisting them, the greater is our Virtue; the sharper our Combat and Trial, the weightier and brighter will be our Crown of Reward. We should lose by it if there was no Opposition, nor would it be thank-worthy to do well without it. Who can imagine himself worthy of the Joys of Heaven, that does nothing for them? Who looks for Wages without Work, or for a Crown without Victory? Therefore the promised Reward depends upon the Observance of that Condition. *Rev. iii. 21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my Throne; even as I overcame, and am sat down with my Father on his Throne.*

Which couches also another Reason, that in order to be conformed to Christ's Image in Glory, we must not refuse to be previously more or less conformable to his Image in suffering and enduring; in mastering this World, and all the Enemies of our Soul. If so, then our present Temptations, by furnishing Opportunities for the Exercise of our Virtue, do plainly add, both to our present Commendation, and our future Recompence: And in Proportion as the Temptation is sharper and more difficult, the more glorious is the Victory, and more joyful the Triumph. That is our Rule to follow, whenever the Divine Providence calls us to suffer; that is our Path to his Glory. Upon these glorious Prospects *St. James, Ch. i. v. 2.* bids the suffering Christians, who undergo those forest of Temptations, which Flesh
and

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and Blood has the greatest Aversion to, to count it all Joy, when they fall into divers of them; because the Trial of their Faith worketh Patience, and Patience makes them perfect and entire; and the light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory. This is the improveable great End of these kind of Temptations, which are to try the Constancy of our Faith, and Firmness of our Hope: And so all those other sorts of them, which proceed from the pleasing Quarter, (for the Devil tries us all manner of Ways, *per aspera, & per blanda*) even those agreeable ones, which are generally more successful in undermining the Soul, because they make their Approach in Appearance of the greatest Friendship, yet are they also applicable to the working out the same glorious Reward. An Opposition, more or less, between Sense and Reason, Faith and Sight, Religion and unruly Desires after this World, is therefore wisely ordain'd in the Constitution of Things; not to prejudice or depress us, but to exercise and try, and by that Means illustrate and exalt our Reason, our Faith, our Religion, in that victorious Triumph here, which may fit us for triumphant Glory hereafter. It is a necessary Struggle now, and no more than necessary, which the Father of the Spirits of all Flesh hath thought fit to leave us in, that it may turn to our greater Advantage, as a Test of that Obedience, and Occasion of that Virtue, which is meet to partake of the exceeding Weight of Glory reserved for Conquerors.

And thus the Wisdom, and Justice, and Goodness of God are clear'd, in permitting us to be exercised with Temptations; and subjecting every Condition of human Life to them. Poverty and Adversity to the Trial of Patience and Resignation;

Resignation; Riches and Prosperity to that of Temperance and a good Stewardship: All Ages, all Circumstances of Life have their peculiar Temptations. But when God has assured us that we shall not *at any time be tempted above that we are able, but that he will with the Temptation also make a Way for our Escape*: Our Victory redounds to his own Glory, and to the magnifying his Strength, that our Lord not only once vanquish'd the Enemy in his own Divine Person, but daily vanquishes him in his faithful Servants and victorious Followers. He takes Delight in observing our Courage and Conduct in these Conflicts with him, seeing us endure Hardships as a good Soldier ought to do: He looks on, he pours in seasonable Recruits, he sustains us during the Action, he comforts us when it is over, and he rewards our Constancy with Joys unspeakable. As the Angels here in the present History came and ministred to our Lord; so Comfort and Satisfaction, as it were from Heaven, flow in to his Disciples, whenever they have baffled a Temptation. And as to the Holiness of God, that is cleared also of all Accusation, when we fall by Temptations; for though the Tempter is present, and the Object before us, he infuses no evil Principle, excites not, moves not, nor necessitates any Man to Sin thereby. God leaves the Issue to every one's free Choice, informing us where, and encouraging us to ask, and depend upon sufficient Strength to conquer. If he takes off the Restraint from *Satan*, and lets him loose on one Hand against us, he offers superior Strength with the other, if we will but pray for it, if we will but use it, which is the Way to have more: And therefore he places us in the midst of Difficulties, that we might have ample Opportunity to exercise our Skill and Courage in this our Day of Trial

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Trial and Probation : No Man knows his own Strength, but by being put to the Proof ; the Pilot is tried by a Storm, the Soldier in a Battle, the Christian by maintaining his Ground against those three Enemies of his Happiness, which he renounced in Baptism ; for which Reason we are placed in mortal Bodies, full of sensual Appetites. The World round about, provided with Goods and Evils, has Avenues, by means of our Senses, constantly open to our Soul ; and the Tempter is always ready, and trying to draw us with the Chains of Opportunity and Importunity ; yet all these numerous Foes, laying such constant and close Siege to the Soul, are not able to demolish her Virtue, or make a Descent upon her Innocence, without her own Consent : And such frequent and assiduous Attacks upon Mankind are permitted for various excellent Purposes ; for the Trial of our Virtue ; for Encrease of our spiritual Strength, Exercise contributing to that of the Mind no less than of the Body ; for the Prevention of spiritual Pride and Security, by such Experiments of our own Weakness, if left to ourselves ; and of our still remaining liable to Temptation, notwithstanding any Attainments in Grace and Virtue ; for the correcting some past Misdemeanor, or subduing some rebellious Lust, which oftentimes makes Insurrection, and interrupts the Piety, even of very good Men ; or for the magnifying the Power of divine Grace, in carrying them through Difficulties, which human Nature, destitute of such Assistances, had not been able to bear up against ; for the sake of shewing the World Examples of surprising Patience, Resolution, and Firmness of Mind, to provoke their Imitation, and encourage the honest, but feeble Intentions of others ; *weaning the Affections from Things here below, raising the Mind by Heavenly Dispositions,*

and in Proportion to their present Struggles, reserving a sure and *more abundant Recompence of Reward*, for the Crown of their Toil and Labours at the last great Day ; for these great and good Ends Temptations meet us so frequently : No Truce as long as we live, nor Cessation of Arms, nor Siege to be raised till the Walls are demolished by Death : Nothing but a constant Striving and Opposition, more or less, according to the Advances we have made, between Sense and Reason, the Law of the Mind and the Law of the Members, as long as they cohabit, and are joined together in our mortal Constitution.

And that these Temptations should haunt and pursue us close at all Times, and in all Places, is not strange, since we ourselves carry about us the very Matter of our Temptations, and can never run away from that in-born Concupiscence upon which they work, and from whence they take Occasion to destroy us. This is the Account we may give ourselves, why there should be such an uninterrupted Succession of Temptations one upon another ; why our Profession is tempted by Heresy and Schism, our Temperance by Abundance, our Constancy by the Severities of suffering, our Watchfulness by carnal Security, our Perseverance by continual Batteries playing upon the Soul unseen, and almost unfelt, by the Arts and Management of the wicked one.

Thus there are Snæres laid for us in every thing ; in Prosperity and Riches, in Poverty and Want, in Solitude and Company, in our Pleasures and ordinary Refreshments, in our Cares and Pursuits of earthly Things, in each of our Passions, in every Incident, abroad or at home. He has innumerable Arts of enticing and betraying us, and imposes upon our Judgment with incredible Subilty and Address ; he moves the Inclination,

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inclination, and inflames it; he sows the Seeds of Discord; heightens Quarrels, and angry Resentments; whets our Appetite to Intemperance; kindles Lust, and urges fleshly Desires; provides Incentives, and Occasions to Sin; strives that we may neither want strong Inclinations to do wickedly, nor inviting Opportunities to gratify them; and hath unspeakable Variety of Ways and Means to seduce, assault and vanquish us. He suits every Inclination, and strikes in with our present Want and Temper; as in the Chapter of the Text he takes the first Cause of his Temptations, from our Blessed Saviour being hungry. Nay, in our very Fasting and Austerities, and religious Duties, he will watch us to prevent, as much as he can, their good Effect, that they may turn to the less Account and Avail against him, by scattering our Thoughts, and amusing our Heads with something else, while we are conversing in private with our Maker. If he cannot prevail with us by the Charms of sensual Pleasure, or the Poms of this World, or a Multitude of Business, or any other Guile with which he is industrious to oblige and gratify the Body; if none of these have the desired Effect, he changes his Method, and tries to pervert our very Duty and Safe-guard to our Ruin. If he can but manage our Fasts and Retirements, our Prayers and Charity, so as at the same time to cherish spiritual Pride, and blow us up with fond Conceit of our meriting a higher Reward; if our Attainments dispose us to despise others, who have not the like Grace, nor Leisure, nor Opportunity; and in Consequence of our own Virtue and Character, to be free in censuring others; if we bely, or misinterpret our Brethren's innocent Liberties; detract from their Virtues, or maliciously expose their Failings; if we treat the rest of Mankind with Pharisaical Pride and

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Distinction;

Distinction; if *Satan* has thus far succeeded, he has done the Business as effectually this Way, (and all Methods are alike to him) as if he had undermined us by the Pleasures, the Profits, or the Honours of this World. On which Account the Enemy of Souls, out of Policy, may sometimes provoke us to Things naturally good, upon Condition that we shall omit some other necessary and more obligatory; and this is his greatest Subtily of all, because herein we have the deceitful Comfort of having done well, and can very hardly spy our Error. Thus he may suggest Impatience, or unlawful Ways of escaping a Temptation, which is the same to him as if it had succeeded: Sometimes the preferring a less to a greater Evil, in such Circumstances, when neither should be consented to; and sometimes he advises the changing one Sin for another, the Sin of the Flesh for the Sin of the Spirit; as if a Publican or a Prodigal should turn a Pharisee, he is equally gratified, and no Loser by the Change.

Seeing then, my Brethren, we may be undone by so many hidden Snares, and are exposed to the Darts of the wicked One from every Quarter, and the best of us are liable to be hurt and wounded by some of them; what Watchfulness, Diligence, and Circumspection should it quicken in the Soul, to arm against this restless Enemy? What Vigour and Constancy, what Severity and Resolution, are requisite on our Part to withstand, and *having done all, to stand*? If the Soldier keep no Watch, if the Centinel fall asleep, how easily may he be surprised by the Enemy?

If we are engaged in wrestling with Principalities, Powers, and take no Care of our Guard, we must be inevitably thrown, and inevitably perish; so that there is the same Necessity to watch against his Wiles, as against Damnation itself.

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We must put on the whole Armour of God, the *Shield of Faith*, girt about with Truth, the *Breast-Plate of Righteousness*, the *Helmet of Hope of Salvation*, and the *Sword of the Spirit*, which is the Word of God. This last our blessed Lord particularly made use of to repel the Attempts of *Satan*; which infers the Necessity of being well acquainted with it, as it is the Rule of our Duty, what we ought to do, and what avoid; as well as of the Manner how to manage and wield this divine Weapon. If at any time we are tempted to Sin in our Distress, our Wants and Exigencies, we should arm ourselves, like him, with that Text, *Man lives not by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the Mouth of God*; and store our Memories with those, that command and direct us to trust in his good Providence, who can never want Power to do what is best for us in all our Difficulties: Or if we are strongly enticed by the Poms and the Glory of this World, to forsake our Maker, and worship *Satan*, and become his Servant; to remember those conquering, overpowering Texts, which shew that the Worth of the whole World is not to be set in Competition with the Loss of the Soul; and which make it our indispensable Duty to wean our Affections from it, and place our Love on God. Or if we should be solicited to any unnecessary, dangerous, presumptuous Hazards and Experiments; to recollect where we are forbid to *tempt the Lord God*, and not to seek any needless Cause of proving his Care over us, which is certainly the Way to throw us out of his Protection. Thus the Example of our Lord and Saviour directs us to the Manner of opposing those general Temptations of Covetousness, Presumption, and Distrust of God: So shall we have the same Success that he had, if we follow his Method; provided, especially, if we invoke his divine

Aid to assist our Insufficiency, and succour our Diligence: Thro' his Help, who has effectually bruised the Serpent's Head, we shall do great Acts, and it is he that shall tread down our Enemies; our Soul, tho' beset and compass'd about with Enemies on every Side, that would swallow us up quick, yet by his prevailing Means shall it escape, *as a Bird out of the Snare of the Fowler*; the Snare will be broken, and we shall be delivered. Our Corruption and Infirmities are not able in their own Force to make Head against the Adversary: And this is one of many Frailties, which we must needs watch against, that we are apt to trust too much to our own Ability to withstand the Assaults of Temptation, and so neglect the divine Directions, *to watch and pray, that we enter not into Temptation*, by reason of the Weakness of the Flesh, and Inconstancy of our Nature; but, in Dependance on that, let us resolve indeed for Victory.

One Enemy there is especially, which this Season puts us in mind of, to have a very watchful Eye over, I mean our bodily Appetite, which is the more dangerous, as it gives the Devil the main Advantage against us, and is always violently enclined to join with him, and betray the Soul. If, *striving for the Mastery*, we are not temperate in all Things, there is no driving out this domestick Foe and Seducer; the Condition of our Nature has tied us close to him, and we must carry him about with us to the Grave: And what can aggravate our Perils more, than that we are under a Necessity of subsisting the Forces that fight against us? Kill them we must not; starve them we ought not: But we are bound to subdue and keep them under; *to crucify our Members on the Earth, to mortify the Deeds of the Body, to lead the Life of the Spirit*, by using
such

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such Self-denial, as will bring the Flesh, and all its Motions into Subjection to it, that Reason and Religion may rule and govern, and have all their just Influence and Restraint upon our Desires and Actions, by preserving our Body in strict Temperance, reducing the ungovernable Appetite by all convenient Abstinence; avoiding at all Times, now more especially, all Pampering and Indulgence: For nothing beats the Powers of the Soul off their Guard and Watchfulness, and reduces us to a State of Thoughtlessness and Inactivity, and lets him in to take Possession, like Gluttony and Drunkenness, Sensuality and Love of Pleasure. Therefore, if ever we would keep him out, and win the Day, in this our Combat, we must maintain a strict Government against them, by using so much discretionary Abstinence, as "that our Flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey his Godly Motions in Righteousness and true Holiness."

To conclude: The safest Way to conquer in all Temptations that recommend themselves by what is pleasing and grateful, is to fly the first Beginnings, Occasions, and Opportunities. But whatever, on the other hand, offers to terrify us out of Dury and Stedfastness, by Pain and Suffering, there to make Head, stand our Ground, and resist courageously: Considering well, in either Case, what the Consequence will be, if the Temptation should succeed; that the Tempter certainly intends all that Mischief, Guilt, and Loss, which Sin can effect; that the Devil never hates us more implacably, than when he offers us most plausibly; that the Sense of Danger is the first Step to Security; and therefore that we ought all to follow those Methods which encrease our Aversion to Sin, and avoid all those Ways which may contribute to lessen it.

*Lord, we beseech thee, grant thy People
Grace to withstand the Temptations of the World,
the Flesh, and the Devil, and with pure Hearts
and Minds to follow Thee, the only God, through
Jesus Christ our Lord!*



S E R-



For the 2d Sunday in *Lent*.

S E R M O N

The Sixth.

*Reasons why God delays and denies
Petitions.*

Why Importunity prevails.

*Faith, Humility, Perseverance, Re-
quisites.*

MATTH. xv, 28. Conclusion of the Day's
Gospel,

*Then Jesus answered, and said unto her, O
Woman, great is thy Faith: be it unto thee
even as thou wilt. And her Daughter was made
whole from that very Hour.*

WHAT is peculiarly remarkable in
the Gospel of this Sunday (for the
healing Persons possess'd with the
Devil was ordinary and frequent
with our blessed Saviour) is the importunate Ad-
dresses of this Woman of *Canaan*, whom St. Mark
calls a *Syrophœnician*; *Canaän* and *Syrophœnicia*
being the same Country; and also a *Greek*, which
was a general Name the *Jews* gave to all Gen-
tiles or Heathens. This I just mention to recon-
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cile the Difference between the *Evangelists* relating this History. Yet, which is most observable, the merciful and compassionate *Jesus*, so different seemingly at this Time from himself, does not appear for a great while to give ear to her Cries, but to slight the Importunity, and put her off, with an Excuse that carried the Air of a Denial. *I am not sent*, replied he, v. 24. *but to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel.* i. e. to the whole Nation of the *Jews*, who being all dispers'd abroad as Sheep without a Shepherd, are therefore stiled lost Sheep, in *Matt.* ix. 36. To that Nation the *Messiah* was first promis'd; to them accordingly he first came to publish the glad Tidings of Salvation: But this Woman was an Alien from the Common-wealth of *Israel*; therefore had no Pretence to Ministrations from him, who was solely the Minister of the Circumcision, as the Scripture stiles him, as long as he tarried on Earth. Notwithstanding this Slight, and seemingly cruel Repulse, nothing discouraged, she persists to importune him for Mercy, and pursues him with Sighs and Tears, no doubt, as well as Cries. She only doubles her Earnestness to melt him down into Pity and Compassion on her distressed Condition, *falls down and worships him*, and beseeches the Lord in a most moving Manner to help her.

Her Importunity, together with her deplorable Circumstances, we read in the 23d v. had some Time before overcome our Lord's Disciples: Their Hearts were inclin'd to compassionate her, even before their Mother, who was all Goodness itself; and they voluntarily solicit him for her, to do somewhat in her Case, that they might at least get rid of her teasing them: They, I say, of their own Accord, request our Lord in her Favour, so much her Importunity was troublesome to them in general: For the *Roman Catholics*

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Licks cannot remark here, that she made her Application to *Peter*, or *James* or *John*, or any particular Apostle, but to *Jesus* the Fountain-head itself. Still the relenting Physician of Souls holds out, appears to be unmoved, and to be more unmerciful than Man; nay, to repulse her with a Sort of disdainful Answer, like a hard-hearted *Jew*: *It is not meet to take the Childrens Bread, and cast it to Dogs*, v. 26. No better Appellation than that did the *Jews* bestow upon all that were not of the same Religion and Covenant with themselves; presuming, that their Nation only were the beloved Children about God's Table, and the rest of Mankind was as contemptible and mean in Rank as Dogs are in a Family. Such a rough Answer as this, upbraiding her of Unworthiness to receive any Favour, one would have thought was enough to have silenc'd her into Despair; but it did not; her Faith and her Patience held out still; her Meekness bore up against so much Contempt and Denial; she continues her Importunity, and by an ingenious Interpretation of his Denial, and Confession of her own Unworthiness to receive, catches at the Word *Dog*, and, in true Humility, desiring to be thought no better nor deserving higher, replies, *Truth, Lord; yet the Dogs eat of the Crumbs that fall from their Master's Table*. "Glad she was, as one observes, * of the obscurest Hint, of any the meanest Relation she might claim to *Christ*, and the House of *Israel*. If a Dog, then a Retainer to the House and Family; a kind of Servant to the Master, and not unuseful for some Purposes; and therefore, tho' not to be fed with the Childrens Bread, yet not to be starv'd neither, but suffered to lick up the Crumbs and Offals that fall from their Abundance. Therefore by his own Expression, since it wou'd be no Injury

* *Brage on the Miracles.*

“ jury to any of the House-hold, she might hope
 “ he wou’d not use her worse than a Dog, but
 “ in this her great Necessity let her taste one
 “ small Crumb of that tender Pity and Compas-
 “ sion, of which, as she had heard, the Children
 “ did partake in so great Plenty.” At this our
 blessed Lord, in the Words of the Text, breaks
 out into Admirati^on, *O Woman, great is thy*
Faith; be it even unto thee even as thou wilt.
 He commends not the Wit or Ingenuity of her
 Petition (tho’ even that, in her Answer, could not
 be disagreeable) but the Thing he praises is her
Faith, which could last out so long against so
 many Delays and Denials: For that was it which
 prompted her to be so urgent, so instant and in-
 cessant in her Prayer, so humble and resign’d, so
 patient in waiting the Issue of it; and therefore
 deserved especial Notice, particularly in a *Gentile*
 too, which was enough to shame the lesser De-
 grees of it in the *Jews*.

And what inhances it still more in her, as
 well as raises our Wonder at our Saviour’s hard-
 ish Usage of her, is this Consideration; that the
 Subject of her Petition was not a trifling Matter,
 which for the Frivolousness of it might be disre-
 garded; but it was the Removal of the sorest Af-
 fliction that cou’d befall a Mother. “ *Her Daugh-*
ter, she says, *was grievously vexed with an unclean*
Spirit. Possibly an only Child; if not, yet de-
 plorable enough; for being her Child’s, it must
 be her own sad Case in Participation; she could
 not but feel the Distortions, Convulsions, tearing
 of Limbs, and foming at the Mouth, which she
 saw in her Daughter with a Grief unconceivable
 to any but tender Parents: And there was no hu-
 man Cure for it neither.

If the Grievousness and Perplexity of any hu-
 man Calamity, may be said to have a Right to
 divine

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divine Commiseration and Redress, this certainly had; nevertheless the divine Mercy, we find, delayed answering, and seemingly denied for a while such importunate and important Requests; and these Things were unquestionably done and written for our Example. These first Refusals of our Lord were not out of any particular Unkindness to this Woman; but knowing what was in her, he seemed harsh and unrelenting to her earnest Desires, on purpose to draw out to the longest Length of Fervency and Faith that which was settled in the good Dispositions of her Heart, that she might be a Precedent to all that came after her, and her Name might be recorded to all Ages.

Her he therefore delays and puts off; to shew, by Way of Instance, the divine Procedure in granting the Things petitioned for by all that address to the Throne of Mercy. He suffers her Importunity to vanquish him and prevail at last; to instruct all that read or hear her Story in the Efficacy of importunate Desires, and of Perseverance in Prayer.

Nor can any Portion of Scripture be better recommended to our Meditation at this Season than this before us; when we are weaning and reducing our bodily Impediments, and fitting up the Soul to be more prevalent with God in Prayer and Devotion to supply our Needs. And our Needs are but too much a Kin to this Woman's, and of nearer Concern to us; for not only our grown Children, but what is yet dearer, our selves, are under a Sort of Possession from the Devil, not so violent as her Daughter's in the Body, but still we are *grievously vexed* with him in the Soul, which is far worse; yea with a Legion of them, with unruly Passions, with many Lusts after carnal Things, which contend, and tear, and torment us,

us, and the Possession is too strong for us. We must therefore pray as well for ourselves as our Children, and we must have Recourse to the same heavenly Healer. We must fly to the Mercy of the merciful Son of *David*, to restore us to a sound Mind, and recover our distemper'd Souls to the Health, to the Hopes of his Salvation. To answer therefore the Design of this Portion of Scripture, I will divide our Meditations on it into these two following Heads.

- I. To remove all Discouragement from so necessary, so excellent a Duty as Prayer, and to endeavour to give Satisfaction to the Minds of devout Persons, by shewing them some of the wise Reasons why God sometimes delays the giving those Things which he all along intends to grant, and why at other Times wholly denies the Petitions of his Servants.
- II. Why Importunity prevails with God, and what must qualify it to make it successful.

First, Enquire we why God sometimes delays the giving those Things, which he all along intends to grant; and why at other Times wholly denies the Petitions of his Servants. And both of these he unquestionably does for our Good and Benefit altogether: As first, if he delays to grant for some Time what we earnestly beg of him, and is really needful for us; it is to fix and confirm in us the more entire Dependance and Resignation to his Wisdom, which not only knows what is best for us, but when is the best Season of granting it to us: We may think in our Short-sightedness that the present Time is always the fittest, but if God knows that some time hereafter the Grant will turn more to our Good, is it
not

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not so much the greater Kindness to defer it till then? Is not the Delay in that Case very gracious? Besides, by thus holding his Hand, and not granting so instantly, he renders his Blessings dearer and more priz'd by us. How many Repulses, Put-offs, and cold Receptions do Men away with; how many fatiguing Attendances endure in their suing for worldly Favours? Yet still we persecute our Suit incessantly, and our Hopes indefatigably, though it is Hazard whether we succeed or not, though it will hardly recompence our Pains if we do: And is our heavenly Interest less worth the seeking, or does the Donor grudge it us of whose Goodness and Power there is no Bounds? Or can his Truth deceive any, that any should think of desisting? The staying for it some time quickens our earnest Desire and Longing the more; raises our Estimation, convinces and enlarges our Apprehension of the Need and Necessity of it to us: Thus we usually learn the Value best by the Want of a Thing: We never, for Instance, relish the personal Blessing of Health so well, as when deprived of it for some Time; nor the publick Blessing of Peace so well, as in the Apprehension of War. Upon a Recovery after Sickness, we receive that with Joy and Rejoicing, which we hardly thought thanks-worthy before; and God for the most Part further sees it convenient to deal thus with us, that our Desires may be submissive, and we inured and prepared better to bear what he may further lay upon us: Nothing being usually more fatal and pernicious to us than a constant Indulgence. The never thwarting our Humour, is the ready Way of teaching us to grow froward and peevish, insolent and assuming: As any indulgent Parent cannot take a surer Method of spoiling his Child than by soothing and humouring it in every Thing it would have, and just

just when it desires: * The Consequence of which Easiness of theirs they generally find too much Reason to lament, when it is too late. This therefore our gracious God, both infinitely kinder and as much wiser than our earthly Parents, takes care to prevent in respect to all those his dutiful Children whom he loves; in creating them not with real Severity, but true paternal Kindness; breeding them up in that Discipline of Want and Delay, which will gradually cure and correct the Eagerness of our Appetites, and teach us that Patience, which is necessary to perfect us in Virtue. For the exercising our Patience and Faith is another further Intention of God's delaying the Return of our Prayers: Were we with a Wish or short Ejaculation or two to obtain whatever we stand in need of both for our Soul and Body, there would be no Employment for our Trust in God, or Faith in his Promises; Promises made purposely on Condition of Mens asking, seeking, knocking, and persevering instantly in Supplication for the needful Supplies. Is it the Removal of an Affliction, which we supplicate? (as was the Case of this Woman.) But then if Affliction is apt to make People devout, and grow more and more fervent and humbled the longer it continues; it is a very good Reason certainly, and ought to satisfy every good Man, why God does not for a considerable while remove it, though they earnestly entreat him so to do. "Prayer is of so great Advantage to us, and so mightily conducive to the Encrease of true Religion in our Souls, that our gracious God is pleased to take all Methods to engage us in the frequent Practice of

* *Sunt quædam nocitura impetrantibus, quæ non dare, sed negare, Beneficium est. Estimari debet utilitas potius quam voluntas Petentis—Exorari in perniciem Rogantis sævæ Bonitas est.*
Sen. de Benef. l. 2.

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of it, and raise it to the greatest Height of rational Fervency. And because we are too apt to neglect it, and grow cold and formal therein; when a constant Prosperity has made our Spirits gay and careless; in Mercy he gives such a Turn to our Affairs, *dashing them with something grievous and afflictive*, as may make us serious and thoughtful, and bring us nearer to himself in Prayer and Supplication; and so prolongs our Sorrows, that we, feeling the Smart, may fly to him who is our only Help in Time of Need: And he will seem not to regard us for a Time, that our Devotion may be raised to its due efficacious Pitch, but rather to turn away his Ear, and add as it were to our Affliction instead of removing it: Seemingly hiding his Face and shutting his Ears, while he designs us no Unkindness nor Refusal: Because this is the most likely Way to put us upon using that grateful Violence to Heaven, which never fails of Success, to make our Addresses to the Throne of Grace so many, so vigorous, and so importunate as they cannot be denied; knowing that our waiting will be abundantly recompensed; our Heaviness turned to Gladness, and the *Bones which he had thus long broken* will have their Turn to rejoice, in a seasonable Relief of that never-failing Mercy, which will either take away the Affliction, or impart inward Consolation to render it lightsome, and us the more confident of a better Portion to come. And not only for our Sakes does he thus adjourn and delay, and seemingly refuse the Requests of our Lips, but also for the Good of others. " Oftimes God sees it necessary in the World to set out some Examples of Content and Patience, that Men may see both what they ought to follow, and how they may be able to perform it, by the Instances before them; that they be not discourag'd

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with desponding Thoughts of their being insufficient to bear those Things with Patience, if they should be called to it, which they see are borne by others like themselves, with very great Patience, every Day. Example is a prodigious Encouragement to Action: As it shews every Thing to be feasible, so it strangely animates such imitating Creatures as Men are with Courage, Confidence and Resolution, to pass through those Difficulties which they see before their Eyes. Time and Patience will overcome in the Pursuit of good and honourable Things: And thus many Instances are written, for our Example, in Holy Scripture, as Patterns of Patience and Long-suffering, to shew us what it is to meet with Repulses and Delays, and to submit to heavenly Wisdom, and own God's Mercy and Goodness in all his Disposals and Administrations of our Affairs." But then if we consider his Proceedings in Respect to spiritual Blessings, we may be assured he will deny the granting not one of them in the Measure and Kind which are proper for us. He very wisely *delays* sometimes the performing our Petitions, as to them, that we by Continuance in Prayer may the better fit and qualify ourselves for their Reception; and likewise till we have on our Part fulfilled the Condition which he has indispensably annexed to all the Grants he has promised to us. The Condition they are every one suspended on, is the Concurrence of our own diligent Endeavours, and our Use and Application of all the prescribed Means. For Instance, should any pray for Meekness and Government over their Passions; yet, upon very little Occasion, fret, fume, grow angry, and take no Care to restrain their Resentments; or if others should intercede for the Avoidance of Sin and Evil, yet thrust themselves into needless Temptations.

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or if any other Grace or Virtue whatsoever is desired, and at the same Time our joint Care and required Caution of attaining to it are omitted; all such Prayers are affrontive, are vain, are mere idle Words, and empty Wishes; no better to be looked upon than as mocking God, whom they actually bind and oblige all the Time not to grant such Requests, because the very Condition is slighted and neglected which can only, by his Appointment, and in his own Way and Method, ever make them successful. It is on Account of such Neglects and Deficiencies as these that the Prayers of innumerable People, Night and Morning, do miscarry of any good Issue, and are wholly disregarded by God; notwithstanding God is still just to his Word and Promise: The Failure is wholly in us, being unfaithful on our Parts in observing the Conditions which must qualify us to be Receivers of the Things we pray for; and as long as we do the one and omit the other, we greatly deceive our Souls, and shall be all the while nothing advantaged by such Kind of Prayers, but miserably impose upon ourselves to our eternal Destruction, by a Form of Godliness, instead of the Power thereof.

2ly. As to the outward Blessings of this Life, the other Subject of our Supplications and Intercessions to God, there are oftentimes not only great and wise Reasons why God delays answering our Desires, but even altogether denies them. Our blessed Saviour said in Relation to Preheminency in them, *ye know not what ye ask*. And his Apostle St. James accounts for it, iv Chapter and 2, and 3 Verses, *why we ask and receive not, desire and cannot obtain; because we ask amiss*. It is the Effect of God's great and fatherly Kindness towards us, that he gives not many Times to many Persons. We are of that

short Insight into Things, and know for the most Part so little what is best for us, as often to desire with the greatest Eagerness what would be our certain Ruin if granted. Health, Ease, and Plenty, may in the End be more prejudicial than serviceable to our true Interest; for how easily and generally do they dispose us to be sensual and earthly-minded, Forgetters of God, and Despisers of those below us, and liable to fall by all the manifold Dangers and Temptations to Sin which attend such a prosperous State, in which such Multitudes without Number have finally miscarried; whereas, had they been blessed with an adverse or afflicted State, they might perhaps safely have arrived at Heaven? Let therefore every good Man assure himself, that, when God doth not give him all the good Things of this Life which he prays for, it is for this Reason alone, that he foresees they would tend more to his Hurt, than Good. We are apt to desire Riches; but when God sees they will corrupt our Minds, and become a Snare to us, it is of his Mercy that he refuses them. We are apt to pray against Afflictions and Crosses; but when God sees they are the best Means to edify for everlasting Life, and fit us for his Kingdom, he is never more gracious than when he denies these our Petitions. And this is the Case in all other Particulars; whensoever any good Man receives not what he prays for, it is because God knows it will be best for him to be without; and in this Case he always best answers our Prayers when he denies our Requests. In all other Particulars he will never deny the faithful Prayers of such as come to him. *Deny them* he cannot at any Time be said to do properly; for though he does not grant the very Thing in Kind which they pray for, because he foresees it will not be for their Benefit to have it, yet he
always

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always compensates the Denial in giving them something else which shall be far better. Thus our Saviour argues; *If the Father of our Flesh knows how to give an Egg to a Son or Daughter who asks for a Scorpion, how much more certainly will the Father of Spirits give and grant good Things, in Lieu of prejudicial ones, to those who ask him?* If then we will allow God to be wiser than Men, is not this a sufficient Argument and Motive for us to continue steadfast and undiscouraged in our Duty. If our Petition is granted, it is because it may promote our own and other Peoples Good; if it is rejected, it is by Reason it would be really injurious and dangerous for us to succeed. Either Way our Good, we perceive, is consulted by one who unerringly knows our Tempers, and what is best for them, infinitely better than we ourselves. And therefore we should never pray absolutely for external Things, but with such Reserves and Resignations as these, which a very devout Man has assigned. "Lord, if it be thy pleasure, grant me this Request; if what I ask conduce to thy Glory, do thou be pleased to give and prosper it. Lord if thou, to whom all Things, and their Consequences, are perfectly known, seest that this will be for my true Advantage, not only bestow it, but with it Grace to use it to thy Glory: But if thou seest it may prove hurtful to me, do not only deny my Petition, which proceeds from Ignorance and Mistake, but remove far from me the very Desire of that which cannot be obtained without my Prejudice."

This First Inquiry, Why God sometimes delays granting, and sometimes wholly denies our Petitions, being I hope satisfied,

I proceed to the Second, namely, Why Impunity prevails with the Almighty, and what are the Qualifications to render it successful,

Certain it is, that this Importunity, implying Constancy and Fervency, is very much pressed in Holy Scripture. Our blessed Lord utters two Parables, the Intendment whereof was to shew, that *Men ought always to pray and not to faint*; and elsewhere we are injoin'd to *pray without ceasing*, to *continue instant*, to *strive earnestly in Prayer*, to *abide at Supplication*, and to *watch with all Perseverance*. The same is implied in exceeding many Places of the Old Testament, under the Phrases of *seeking the Lord* and *waiting upon God*; all conspiring to teach us, that we should use the greatest Earnestness and Vehemency of Desire, in our Prayers, which can consist with the calm undisturbed Use of our Judgment. Our Lord exaggerates several Expressions to the same Purpose, bidding us *ask*, *seek*, and *knock*, that we may *receive*, that we may *find*, and that it may be *opened* to us: Nay he relates a Parable, in the xith of *Luke*, Verse 8. representing one Friend yielding to another the Succours he desired at an unreasonable Time; not upon the Score of Friendship, or out of any Love to him, but for his continued troublesome Importunity, which would admit no Refusal, nor Excuse: As if to instruct us, that there is Efficacy and Vertue in asking importunately; that, in spiritual Occasions, which are absolutely needful for us, we should be peremptory, eager and bold Beggars at the Throne of Grace, not brooking any Repulse, or being disheartened with seeming Neglect, but remain pertinacious and urgent till we receive the needful Mercy. God will seem to be overcome like a Man, rather than we shall be wanting in Fervency, becoming the Things we pray for.

But, before we see the real Use of Importunity, we ought to rectify any such wrong Notion and Imagination in us, as if God could be really alter'd

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ter'd thereby ; because in him there neither is, nor can be, any Variableness nor Shadow of Change. What Arguments can we use to persuade him, which he does not know already ? Our Prayer can inform Omniscience of not one of our Wants, who knows them all so much better than ourselves ; and to think of moving him by patheticall Intreaties, or fair Speeches, is to look upon him rather as a Man, who changeth without Cause, than an unchangable God, who cannot vary from the Methods of his Government to gratify the Importunity of his Creatures.

To imagine that our passionate Words, or Importunity, can prevail on him to grant our Petition for Pardon of Sin, while we continue in our Sins, and so unqualify our Souls for the Reception of that spiritual Mercy which we beg to defend us from them, is that Prayer which is *an Abomination in the Sight of the Lord*; and that Absurdity which should not be indured among Men. In this then after all consists the happy Use of this our Importunity ; if it is not capable to work a Change in God, it is excellently fitted to work a Change in ourselves who use it : And that is the true Reason God so much requires it, because, while we are thus vehement and constant at our Devotions, it is hardly possible but that it must spiritualize and purify our Minds, and render them fit and meetly qualify'd at last to receive that good and perfect Gift so long intreated. Besides, it argues the Value and Worth the Petitioner sets on those Things, by using such Importunity in the obtaining ; and shews that they deserve all the Vehemency and Activity of his Prayers and Endeavours towards the compassing them. It shews, that he is affected, as he ought to be, with a due Sense of the Necessity of them, and of his Dependance on God alone for the Reception.

ception. St. *Austin* says of himself, before his thorough Conversion, that he prayed so faintly to God against his Lusts, as rather to desire their Accomplishment than Extinction: He retained the Sin as it were under his Tongue, while he confessed it with his Lips: But, in the Gospel, the Woman of *Canaan* is an illustrious Instance of the deep Sense she had of her miserable unhappy Condition, and of the Power and Goodness of God to redress it, which made her so importunate with *Christ*, and her Importunity so prevalent. Thus God and *Christ*, loving our Advantage, love to be addressed, and assaulted as it were, by the Frequency of fervent Prayer, and to hold out some Time, and surrender at last with, *Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* And they have both promised to hear and succeed such Petitions, as if the heavenly Gifts and Graces were to be sold at the fixed Price of the Importunity and Fervency of the Righteous: Cheap if to be had for asking for: Yet it is not the *fervent Prayer* of the *Wicked*, but of the *Righteous*, which avails much. *He filleth the Hungry with good Things, and the Rich he sendeth empty away.* They who are hungry, and earnestly bent upon his good Things, shall have enough, if their Eyes will but *patiently wait upon the Lord, till he has Mercy upon them.* Fervency under the Conduct of Reason is the very Life and Soul of Prayer. *Qui timide rogat, docet negare:* "A cold Petitioner bespeaks a Denial," in Lieu of a gracious Answer; he seems indifferent, or rather to slight the Mercy he is requesting: Prayer is the Business of the Affections and the inward Parts chiefly; from thence must come the holy Flame which must light our Incense, and kindle our Sacrifice: The warm Vigour must be excited from a just Reverence of God and his adorable Excellencies, and a feeling Reflection upon

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upon our own Wants. Thus fervent, we may humbly wrestle with him (as *Jacob* with the Angel) and not *let him go till he bless us*. Nay he is pleased with our Importunity: To Man it would be an Uneasiness, and a Sort of Reproach, as if he wanted Power or Inclination to make good his Promise; but nothing of this can happen to the Omnipotent: He has made himself our Debtor, by promising his free Gifts upon the easy Terms of our requesting: And so generous a Paymaster is he, that he charges us to call upon him frequently for Payment. He will pay, or rather he will give, when it is the most proper and fitting Time for us, and recompense his small Delays with sufficient Interest. And thus far having seen the Efficacy of Importunity, let us next consider the Qualifications which must render it always successful. The Example of this Woman before us confines me to name but three, which were indeed signally illustrious in her: And these are *Humility*, *Faith*, and *Patience*.

Her *Humility* was remarkable, in as much as she never resented our Lord's Repulses with sullen Anger or Passion; as some Beggars are often wont to do when they cannot succeed for an Alms. He compares her proverbially to a Dog: She takes it calmly, and answers, *Truth Lord*, she was unworthy enough; and falls down prostrate at his Feet. And oh! how ought we, vile Dust and miserable Sinners, in Imitation of her, to approach the Majesty of Heaven and Earth with the meanest and most contemptible Opinion of ourselves, and our wretched Unworthiness, by Reason of our Sins; to think ourselves not worthy to gather Crumbs under his Table: Considering that we are admitted into the Presence of, and by Prayer addressing ourselves to the Supreme Majesty of the Lord of all the World, we ought to think
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of our Distance, and make our Application with that Lowliness of Mind, that decent and humble Carriage and reverent Deportment, with that visible Seriousness and Reverence of Soul, with all those injoin'd known Postures of Humility in Prayer, that it may appear to be our solemn Concern how we may do Honour to that adorable Majesty we are addressing, according to his blessed Will and Commandment, of being honoured by all those who draw nigh to him.

The 2d Qualification to render our importunate Prayer acceptable is *Faith*: We have seen how great it was in this Woman; no Delays must stagger it in us neither. And it is that which must recommend all our Prayers to the Throne of Grace, *i. e.* We must assuredly believe that we shall receive, when we ask according to his Promise; and this our Saviour makes a necessary Requisite to our being heard, Mat. xxi. 22. *Whatsoever ye shall ask in Prayer believing, ye shall receive.* And St. James bids us *ask in Faith, nothing wavering.* Now the only Measure which can lead us to believe that we shall receive what we ask, is, as I said before, performing the respective Condition the Promise is affixed to; otherwise, instead of Faith, it would be the grossest Impudence and Presumption to hope it; and when we have used our Endeavour and the Means, then to doubt or distrust God would be the unworthiest Suspicion that can possibly be cast on his Truth and Goodness: Such a Suspicion did we but know an Inferior entertain'd of us for what he supplicated, and depended on us for, and we had pass'd our Word to give, would surely indispose us to grant at all. But it is to be remembered, that, as our Importunity is to be qualified with Attention of Mind, with Fervency and Faith, it does not follow that
therefore

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therefore it must be fraught with Abundance of Words and passionate Expressions: We find not this Woman haranguing Christ with a Flow of Words (yet she neither wanted Wit nor Invention) but in short pathetical Expressions laying her Requests and the Desires of her Soul before him. Our blessed Saviour, in the vith of *Matthew*, has expressly forbid this *much speaking in Prayer*, as expecting to be heard of God upon that Account: He charges us not to imitate the Heathens, in that Respect, who thought to overpower and stun the Ears of their Gods with a Multiplicity of Words, and Variety of Tones and Cadences. Another Act of our Faith is to ask all in Christ's Name. For not only the overflowing Goodness of God's own Nature, but besides that the Interest of his Son *Jesus Christ*, our Mediator at his right Hand, give us a full Security, in all our Requests, that we shall obtain every Thing fitting for us which we ask in his Name; for having given us him, *how shall he not with him freely give us all Things?*

3dly, *Patience* and *Perseverance* are required to crown our Prayers with Success. Says one of the Fathers very well, "We must not only ask that we may receive, but we must ask for that very Reason, because we do not receive: For we are often denied only that we should ask again; and if we receive not, at least it is not owing to any Unwillingness in God, but to some Defect, some Weariness and Impatience of Mind in ourselves."

We must therefore, as the Prophet bids in this Case, *If the Lord tarry, yet wait for him, for he will surely come and heal thee.*



The third Sunday in *Lent*.

SERMON

The Seventh.

A Dissuasive from Covetousness.

Eph. v. 5. Part of the Epistle of the Day.
*Nor covetous Man, who is an Idolater, hath any
Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God.*

THE Apostle is here dissuading the *Epheſian* Converts from ſeveral Vices, which, in their former Converſations of Gentiliſm, were ſo far from Blame and Diſhonour, that they were rather ſpoke of with Approbation, and practiſed with Repute among them; ſuch, particularly, was the ſhameful Works of the Fleſh. To undeceive them of this, and inform them thoroughly of the Nature of the Religion they took on them to profeſs, he acquaints them how eſſential to it was the Practice of Love and Unanimity, and the putting on Diſpoſitions to forgive and forbear one another; how indiſpenſably Charity and Beneficence were to be ſhewn, as Occaſion directed, and Opportunity ſerved; how neceſſary alſo was Purity in their Manners, and even in their Jeſting and Diſcourſe. And, on the other Hand, lets them know, that the Contrary of theſe was in-
conſiſtent with their pure Faith, and undefiled Religion;

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Religion; and charges them, v. 3. that Fornication, and all Uncleanness, and *Covetousness*, be not so much as named with Approbation, much less practised in any Degree. He begins his Argument in the Example of God and Christ, v. 1, 2. and finishes it with Motives drawn from the Hopes of our Calling on one Hand, and the Certainty of the Misery ensuing from God's Wrath on the other; and in regard to Covetousness, the Subject before us, he peremptorily declares, in the Words of my Text, that it is directly repugnant to, and utterly exclusive of the Christian Expectation, and promised Enjoyment of that Inheritance to come in the Heavens, to which they had entered their Hopes and their Title, when they entered into Baptism. *Nor covetous Man, who is an Idolater, bath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God.*

We find the same Apostle, *Colos. iii. 5.* enumerating this Vice of Covetousness among the Works of the Flesh; all the Sorts of them, from the like Reasons and Motives, he convinces that we should, and intreats that we would, mortify and subdue. And at this Season we have especially undertaken to do it; in Sorrow and Repentance to call ourselves to Account for our passed Irregularities this Way, and to give our Affections a right Turn and Object for the future: To recal them from Earth and its Possessions, where they have erred and strayed too long, and place them upon Things above, where they ought to be more conversant.

Full well and fitly is it stiled a Work of the Flesh, since it proceeds from its earthly, inordinate Desires, and also ends, or is intended to end wholly in its Gratifications; and I hope I am carrying on Meditations suitable to this Time, while I am warning against it. It is moreover such

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a Sin as is the Author of most others, an Enemy to all Righteousness, and an irreconcilable Contradiction to that Principle of the Spirit, whence the Life of a Christian must have its Beginning and its Progress to its happy Conclusion.

And if this groveling Iniquity, I am to speak of, is an infallible and eternal Bar, while persisted in, against all Entrance into that holy Place above (as it is impossible in the Nature of the Thing, as well as by the Declarations of Scripture, it should be otherwise) can there possibly be proposed to a Christian's Belief a stronger Dissuasive against it? If it is stigmatised twice by the Apostle St. Paul, by the Name of *Idolatry*, can there be a greater Crime imagined by us Christians? Is there any thing, therefore, we are more concerned to examine ourselves about; lest, while we call ourselves Christians, we are found of God in some respect Idolaters, and in a true Account very wicked? Be pleased then,

- I. That I apprise you of the heinous Guilt and Turpitude of this Wickedness.
- II. That I endeavour to dissuade from it for the future, from the Unreasonableness and Folly of it, in this Life; and lastly, from the Consequences of it, in respect of another to come.

First, it is certainly very wicked, if it is liable to the Imputation of *Idolatry*. I mentioned before, in regard to the internal Iniquity of that Crime, that whereas the original Word imports no more in general than inordinate Desire, which being circumstanced and sorted with particular Objects, and bad Company, denotes a Vice of that particular Sort, as in *Eph. v.* where a covetous

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covetous Man, called an *Idolater*, and excluded from the Inheritance of Heaven, does in Strictness of that Context, explained by the abominable Debaucheries practised by the Heathens in the Worship of some of their Idols, denote some Turpitude of that Nature. Still there is in other Parts of Scripture, and the Likeness of the Case in the chief Part of Worship, a very lively Figure and Reason of Speech for denominating the covetous Man, in the vulgar Idea of him, an *Idolater*.

For what is Idolatry, but giving divine Worship to that which, by Nature, is no God? The Apostle says an *Idol is nothing*; not any Thing, in reality, like unto the Godhead; but merely as the Fancy of the Worshiper, in his Superstition and Consideration, foolishly credits it with Divinity, and confides in it as his God. Now, tho' no Miser's Fancy can be so gross as to imagine his Money to be the Great God in good Earnest; yet, if he puts his Trust and Confidence in his Gold and Riches; if his Hopes, if his Fears are bound up, center primarily, and, above all Things, there; if his supreme Love and Desires descend thither, and terminate ultimately thereon; he is as much guilty of inward Idolatry, and Alienation of Worship, as if he thought them a God, and paid actual Adoration to them on his bended Knee; because, in the Scripture Account, a Man's Belly, or any Thing else that he most devotes himself to, may be his God: For Divine Worship, principally and most essentially, consists in those inward Acts of the Mind, which the covetous Worldling withdraws from the most High God, to whom they are solely due, and confers them on his Idol, Riches. By the like Argument we may prove the Church of *Rome* guilty of Idolatry, for paying that inward Homage and Respect to Images, which appertains only to God

God, the Searcher of Hearts; and is the same Crime, as if they bowed the Knee, and worshiped, as to a real God; and their thinking and saying at the same Time, that those Images are not the Divinity itself, will by no Means excuse them.

Now the Covetous do, in wretched Forgetfulness, actually repose their great Concern and Trust in their Possessions. *These are the Men* (and these are the Words of David, Ps. lii.) *who take not God for their Strength, but trust in the Multitude of their Riches; who confidently hedge themselves round with them, in the Phrase of another Prophet, and say that no Harm shall happen unto them;* impiously living, as if they believed a Sufficiency of Wealth the supreme controuling Power and Being, at least of this World, which can either bestow Good, or defend from Evil. So very apt in Experience are Riches to swell Men up with a Self-sufficiency, and to take off their Dependance on the living God, the Giver of them; that God, who, in the Old Testament, again and again charges the Remembrance of the *Israelites*, and again reiterates the needful Advice, lest they forget their Reliance upon him, when, by his Favour, they came to the Injoyment of the rich Land of *Canaan*. And our Apostle, in the New Testament, enjoins *Timothy* to charge *those who are rich in this World*, with especial Caution, and the utmost Wariness (so very great is their Hazard) *that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God.*

If we would account rightly for such Numbers so inordinately intent upon heaping up Riches, it must be imputed to a secret Infidelity, and Distrust of Providence, which lies at the Heart, and delfy that Mammon the Man is so devoted to. The Thoughts and Cares of his Mind, the Service of his

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his Life, all look and worship this Way, which is all the while the contrary Way to God and Religion, both which he fairly turns his Back on, and bids Adieu to; our Lord assuring us, that no Man can serve God and Mammon: The Hope of worldly Gain is the Aim, and the Measure of his seeming to be religious; and he likes and uses Religion only as a Help to the same, and will put on the Form and Profession of serving the true God, and come to Church, and worship there as others do, because this keeps up his Credit, and he gets by that: But if he could be assured of getting more by denying God, and railing at him, he would not be long in deliberating about it; for his Heart is absent, and fixed elsewhere, even on his divine Mammon, all the Time he affords his bodily Presence here. When the Felicity of another World, and the Way thither, make Overtures to court him, he has made Love to this, and his Affections are so deeply pre-engaged, that he is married, he has consummated the Match, and he will never consent to be divorced. Neither the Promises nor the Threats of Scripture, nor any of the divine Energy of its Arguments, (tho' sharper than a two-edged Sword) can penetrate a Heart encased in Gold, to have any saving Influence on it. The Man has neither Hopes, nor Desires, but to encrease what he has; neither has he any Fears but of diminishing, but of losing it: Take that from him, he is undone, his Vexation will be greater than that of *Micah*; *They have taken away my Gods; and what have I more?* Judg. xviii. 24. His Apprehension of things beyond Sense, is benumbed to a kind of Incredulity; he lives only for one World; what therefore only affects him, is the Certainty of Things present: The Fears or the Hopes of invisible Futurity invite his Mind to good Things no more than the Tongue

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of Man is able to open a Chest of Iron ; to such Considerations he sits by all the Time like a stupid Sot, and has no more Ears than one of the Pillars of the Church he is in : For what signifies the Promise of heavenly Things to one who has no Value for such Treasure ? Or what the Threats of Hereafter to him, who dreads nothing but the Present ? Promise him the whole Kingdom of Heaven upon easy Service, he would rather you gave him a few of this World's good Things upon much harder Terms. Tell him of Hell-Fire hereafter, he will part with nothing present to save himself from it ; he will not understand, no not he, how *giving to the Poor is lending to the Lord* ; or how he shall be any thing the better for what is lay'd out, or, as he thinks himself, lost that Way. Thank you for that, he is not for lending his Money upon such Sort of Security. Ask him for a charitable Use, he protests he has no Money ; acquaint him with a gainful Purchase, he has enough ready ; he has no Notion of, nor any Belief in the wise Man's Observation in *Prov. ii. 24, 25.* *There is who scatter, and yet encrease ; there is who withhold more than is meet, but it tendeth to Poverty. The liberal Soul shall be fat.* A perfect tenacious Infidel is he to all such charitable Distributions ; because his Faith, and the Creed he lives by, is " so much saved, so much got." No matter how unreasonably and dishonourably saved, provided he keeps that which he values beyond Heaven, his Soul, the Satisfaction of doing Good, the Prayers of the Poor, the good Report of Men, or aught else whatever. 'Tis true, he so far believes the Christian Religion, as to borrow an Excuse from it for his niggardly, penurious Temper ; and from one occasional Advice of not neglecting to *provide for one Family*, he thinks

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thinks himself justified in disobeying any other Command about parting with a Portion of what he has upon religious or charitable Accounts. He deludes his Conscience, and sanctifies all the Sins of his sordid Parsimony with the Name, and the Virtue of a provident Care of Family and Posterity, which he learns from the Scripture, that he who *neglects is worse than an Infidel*; and so by miserable Carking, and unjust Saving for that, turns Reprobate to all Religion, overlooks all the numerous Precepts of Charity and doing Good, with the Means and Opportunity which God has to that very Purpose put into his Hands.

Now what Excuse he will make to the Judge of all the World, when he is passing Sentence on him for his negligent Omission and Hard-heartedness, in not *feeding the Hungry, cloathing the Naked, visiting and assisting the Needy*, I know not; but he may read before-hand, from the Mouth of his Judge, in *Matth. xxv.* and tremble what his Condemnation will be; when he shall hear it grounded on that very With-holding from the Poor and Indigent, and Forbearing to do that Good with his Means, in which he places all his foolish Wisdom; as if it was Charity enough for him not to have done Wrong to any-one, and not to take the Meat out of another's Mouth, was to feed him, not to strip or take away his Garment, was to cloath him. And while he continues in that narrow, uncharitable Disposition, let me farther assure him, he must renounce all Pretensions to Religion; for to be covetous and religious at the same time is a direct Contradiction, not to be reconciled by the Christian Religion, which is summed up, in various Places of holy Writ, to consist wholly, as it were, in our Love of God, and of our Neighbour. As to the first, it declares him utterly void and destitute of it;

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He that bath this World's Goods, and seeth his Brother in Need, and shutteth up his Bowels of Compassion, how dwelleth the Love of God in him? What Pretence can there be of its dwelling in any such hard-hearted People, unless upon the Tip of their Tongue, which only heightens the Sin with the greater Hypocrisy? And as to the Love of our Neighbour, I need not prove that Benefactions are the best Instance thereof, where there is Ability for it, and Occasions requiring it: But the covetous Man is averse to any thing of that Nature, which he can help; so that we see not how the Heathen Idol-Worshiper is more destitute of the Power and Spirit of the Christian Religion. The one may, out of Ignorance, have a wrong Object, or wrong Manner of Worship, but his Works and Practice is the better of the two; for this deliberately worships and serves, and puts his Trust and Reliance on his Wealth, which he knows to be no God, and ceases from those good Deeds of Relief and Kindness, which so much make up the Life and Substance of Religion.

Tho' you discourse to such a Man with the Tongue of Men or Angels of the Excellency of Virtue, the Necessity of doing Good before he dies, the Pleasures in doing it, and the Recompence in another World, lo! you are to him (as the Prophet represents it) as a very lively Song of one that has a pleasant Voice. They come, says Ezekiel; unto thee as the People cometh, and they sit before thee as my People; they hear thy Words, but will not do them; for with their Mouth they shew much Love, but their Heart goeth after Covetousness, Chap. xxxiii. ver. 31, 32. This is that Deceitfulness of Riches, which our Saviour says choaks the Word, and defeats all the Arguments of Religion; and is that worldly Gangrene of the Soul,

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Soul, which tarnishes and discolours it, as the Jaundice does the Body ; and, if it is not taken in Time, will overspread and destroy its Health, and eat out the Vitals of Religion, supplant God at last, render us odious both to God and Men, and bring us in the End to everlasting Destruction.

Besides, the Mischiefs and guilty Consequences of this Vice are almost infinite : There is not a Villainy to be named, or thought of, which hath not, some time or other, proceeded from this fruitful Parent. One of the greatest the Sun ever shone on had its Motive from hence. *Judas*, we know, betrayed his Lord and Master Christ for 30 Pieces of Silver. The Soldiers too concealed his Resurrection, the principal Article of our holy Faith, for wretched Reward ; *they took Money, and did as they were bid.* Neither Truth nor Innocence can be secure from it : Conscience, Principle, Honour, have been all deserted for it, and made a Penny of ; and there is nothing so sacred, that it will not trample down ; nor any thing so dangerous, that it will not adventure on ; nor so base, which it will not readily perpetrate : How often has Bribery condemned the Innocent, and clear'd the Guilty, and effectually tempted Men to those Things, which nothing but Money, and the undue Love of it, could induce them to ? To what else is owing Fraud and Knavery, and all the Subtleties of Over-reaching, Oppression, Robbery, Perjury, and other Injustices, but to the cursed Suggestions of the Love of this World ? For, as that is bent only upon the End of getting, or keeping, it regards not the Means, nor the Manner how ; the shortest is the best ; honourable or dishonourable, it matters not, if the Business can be accomplished with Secrecy, or at least Impunity. *God is not in all their Thoughts,*
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nor in any of their Projects ; and all they are desirous of, is a bare Appearance of Honesty, which will serve their Purpose as well as that real Virtue. They have seldom Checks from within to tell them that Sort of Dealing is not fair, nor just, nor kind ; or if they have, they quiet those Thoughts with Intentions of repenting hereafter : Whereas they do not consider that Restitution and Satisfaction for the Injury and Wrong done is so necessary, so absolutely necessary a Part of Repentance, that there can be no Peace with God without it ; and yet their Injustices may be such, that if they are afterwards willing, they cannot make Restitution, in Kind, of their ill-gotten Wealth : For which Cause a Woe is denounced against those *who make Haste to be rich*, and a Declaration entered against them, by another holy Penman, and Advocate for God, that they *shall not be innocent* : And, by a third, a double Woe is proclaimed to him, *who increaseth that which is not his, to him that ladeth himself with thick Clay, to him that coveteth an evil Covetousness to his House, that he may set his Nest on high. He has consulted Shame, and sinned against his own Soul ; the Stone shall cry out of the Wall, and the Beam out of the Timber shall answer it ;* Hab. ii. 6, 9, 10. And again, *for the Iniquity of his Covetousness was I wrath and smote him, saith the Lord,* Hsai. lvii. 17. And a Dissuative is elsewhere pressed by St. Paul, which is enough to damp the Solitude of their inordinate Pursuits, *that they that would be rich fall into divers Temptations and Snares, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition,* 1 Tim. vi. 9.

It avails little whether the Design and Project of this avaricious Temper is to spend upon Sensuality and Pleasure, or to hoard up for hoarding sake ;

ake; for both the Abuse, and the Disuse of Wealth is criminal, the Measure and Ends of each are sinful: The very Character of the Miser in the Gospel * lies in this his evil Intention; the Purpose of his enlarging his Barns and Stores was to enlarge his own Gratifications; and when he had, with much Labour and Anxiety, heaped up great Abundance, and thought himself in sufficient Affluence for that Purpose; he judged, as he imagined, very wisely within himself, that it was Time now to leave off; that he had been a Slave long enough, and would enjoy the Fruits of his Industry and much Pains; and would now break Bulk, enter upon the Hoard, lay out freely from it, live hospitably, make a Figure, deny himself no Pleasure, but taste whatever Varieties were agreeable to him: *Soul, eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast Stores laid up for many Years.* This was the Resolution he had framed to himself, and since he would have more Riches than the Measure of his Life, God meted him the same Measure, destroyed Life, and gave the Fruits of it to another, and not one Day of Life and Enjoyment was granted him; but, with the Reprehension of, *Thou Fool*, that very Night his Soul was separated from that which it had been so long fixed and engaged upon.

It may be proper to apply, and observe upon this History, two Things farther, which rich Men are exceedingly apt to forget: For tho' you convince all Men in general, that Covetousness is a Sin, yet it is the last thing a covetous Man will be convinced of, that he is the Man guilty. From hence remark we therefore,

1. That Covetousness may be charged upon honest Acquisitions, if they are immoderately desired, or too long pursued, or take us off from the Care of better Things; for we do not read that this

* Luke xii.

Rich Man got any of his great Possessions by fraudulent, unjust Methods, but all were the Fruits of his honest Labour,

2dly, It informs us, that they who are solicitous to raise great Fortunes purely to indulge and please themselves, are likewise guilty of this Vice; for this was the settled Prospect of the Miser; and it is to be praised and extolled, in respect of the sordid Parcimony of those Worldlings, who cark and scrape all their Life-time to no other End but to encrease and multiply what they have, resolving to live, not generously frugal, but poorly miserable, that they may attain the Happiness of dying rich.

If ever such Wretches do Good to the World, it is by their dying, and leaving their Substance to some who will have the Heart to use it as it ought to be used: For, while the Niggard lives, he does Good neither for himself nor others; he has not the Heart to be a Friend to any Body, to do any public Good which will cost him Money: And who will therefore value him? It is the wise Man's Question (*Eccclus. xiv, 4.*) *Who is Evil to himself, to whom will he do Good?* If he should do a small Kindness, he puts it out to Usury, and is so unsatiable a Creditor that he thinks he is never repayed: But for any public, generous Action, he as unwillingly parts with his Money, as he would with the Teeth out of his Head. He believes there is no Injustice in keeping what he has close to himself, let who will have a Title to his Charity and Assistance, as long as the Law of the Land does not punish it; and therefore may he fitly be styled a *Villain* and a *Robber* within the Protection of the Law. A Miser of this Kind was rightly served by *Dionysius* the Tyrant, who, hearing that one of his Subjects had amassed vast Treasure, and lived very miserably, sent to him

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to surrender it into his Hands; which he did, only reserving a small Portion, with which he retired into another Country, and lived and enjoyed that Little very liberally; which the King hearing of he caused the Rest of his Treasure to be restored him, saying, Since he had now learn'd how to use it, he would no longer detain it from him.

However, every such Miser, among Christians, is a Deserter of Humanity, and a Traitor to all the Laws of God and Nature, which command him to extend his Mercy this Way, if ever he expects any from his Hands; and to convince him of his Injustice, God, in his holy Word, stiles those Things which he so much covets and labours after to make his own, *Things of others*, Luke xvi. 12. as if others had as good a Title to them as the Owners. Some Title they have; for the Poor and Necessitous claim immediately under God Almighty, the supreme Proprietor and Bestower of all Wealth, who has constituted the rich Man a temporary Steward and Dispenser, rather than an appropriating Possessor, for the Layings-out of which he is accountable to him; and has, for that Reason, ordered the Inequality there is in the Circumstances of the Sons of Men under that Tenure and Appointment, that the Abundance of some may supply the Wants of others, and has, in great Favour, indowed some with plentiful Circumstances, that, by making a wise Use of them, they might thereby grow richer towards God by being *rich in good Works*, as our Apostle entreats, *ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come*: And a blessed rich Opportunity have they of reaping plentifully the incorruptible Treasures by sowing prudently and dispersing bountifully, as they have received Plenty. In Truth, it is only worth a Man's

Man's Industry, and Acquaintance with such short Possessions, that he may thereby make *Friends of that Mammon of Unrighteousness*, that they may serve him in Time of Need. But such is the Weakness and Impotency of human Nature, so great the Proneness of our corrupt Inclinations to that which is Evil, that we can scarce abstain from the Commission when Opportunities are in our Power, and he who is rich has almost all in his Power of doing whatever his evil Heart prompts him to: And who doubts but a Man must struggle hard to maintain his Integrity in a whole Circle of Temptation? So that their Condition, all Things considered, is not much to be envied by a Candidate for the indurable Riches: And St James rather thinks it is *Matter of Joy and Thanksgiving, than Sorrow and Disappointment, to the Rich to rejoyce, as he says, in that he is made low*; for escaping, as it were, the Rock which most have split upon.

It requires a much greater Firmness and Constancy of Mind to use an ample Fortune well than a small one; and it is certain the Difficulties of Salvation encrease with the Encrease of Riches. *How hardly do rich Men enter into the Kingdom of Heaven?* said our blessed Lord. It is exceeding hard for them not to trust and confide in them more than they should, and not to love them more than they ought: There lies the very Difficulty and Impossibility assigned by our Saviour. The young rich Man, in the Gospel, who seemed to be very well inclined, and to have made some Progress in Knowledge and Virtue, yet parted with Christ his Saviour out of the Prevalency of his Affection to his much Riches; and there are, I am afraid, many religious Christians who yet lack this one Thing, that they be not so eager as they are in prosecuting, nor greedy in keeping
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this World's Goods. Many a *Demas* and seeming Disciple *have forsaken*, and do forsake the Kingdom of God and of Christ, for having *loved this present World*: And we have but one Instance in holy Record of any who despaired of another World, and he was the covetous *Judas*. It is well however if we do not presume too much upon our future Inheritance, while we doat so fondly on our present corruptible ones.

I might say much more of the Guilt and Wickedness of this Vice, and how general, and yet how great a Hindrance it is to Religion, and how fitly it deserves the Appellation given it in my Text of *Idolatry*.

But I promised to say somewhat, in the Second Place, of the Unreasonableness of it.

The fundamental Error and Absurdity seem to consist in this Infatuation, to esteem Gold and Silver for Things really in themselves good, whereas they are some of the Means only whereby Good is procured; and, if the worldly Miser has not the Heart to convert them to that Good which they are capable of administering, he will ever want what he is seeking for. This is the very Institution, Design, and Use of Riches; and, as the wise Man says, there is no Good in them, but *for a Man to rejoice* and enjoy them soberly, and do Good in his Life-Time with them: But the stingy, illiberal Soul puts them to no Use but to feed his greedy Eye, and grasping Thoughts. Mean Time the Solicitude and Anxiety of getting, and Dread of losing, pierce him thro' with many Sorrows; and when he has raked together Wealth with indefatigable Toil thro' many careful Days and sleepless Nights, he has laboured all the while for the Wind, for he has no Power to taste thereof, but is cursed in the Midst of his Abundance. So the Scripture acquaints and forewarns us. *He who*

that is greedy of Gain troubleth his own House ; he that gathereth by defrauding his Soul, gathereth for others who shall spend his Goods riotously. The Greediness of Gain taketh away the Life, and spoileth the Enjoyment of the Owners thereof. And again, there is not a more wicked Thing than a covetous Man ; for such a one setteth his Soul to Sale, because while he liveth he casteth away his Bowels. There is a Gain which turneth to Loss ; and for Owners to keep Riches to their own Hurt is a sore Evil. Solomon remarks it as an inflictive Disease and a common Evil which attends upon Covetousness among Men, that, though God hath given to a Man Wealth, Riches, and Honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his Soul of all he desireth, yet God giveth him not Power to eat thereof. More is still his Desire, when he has that Most in Possession. Most other Desires are satisfied in the Enjoyment of their Object, but this unreasonable one never ; when fullest then is it most empty ; it compels to get what it forbids to enjoy, excites an Appetite to this World's Pleasures, but denies the Gratification. Wretched Distemper, indeed, to refuse to eat because one is ready to famish with Hunger ! nor will eating satisfy, for he that loveth Silver will not be satisfied with Silver, nor he that loveth Abundance with Increase. He hates Poverty above all Things, yet runs directly into it : To be poor for Fear of Poverty, is just as if Man should die for Fear of Death. The poor rich Man is emphatically poor, as one elegantly describes him ; poor in his own Opinion and for that Reason miserable in Reality ; indeed much more so than the poorest Wretch destitute of Conveniences, but not half so to be pitied ; for he is a despicable Creature of his own making : The Wants of the one may be supplied, and he made happy, because

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cause he needs and wishes only what he has not ; but the other's Wants are miserable and unsatisfiable, because he wants even what he has. "To Prodigality many Things are wanting, but to Covetousness every Thing." This verifies the Observation of Solomon. *There is, says he (Prov. xiii. 7,) who maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing :* He would indeed be much happier if he really had nothing ; for how much Pains does he take to be miserable in the something which he has got ? He disquiets himself to amass to no better Purpose than to torment himself ; in the keeping all the Pleasure he takes is to add to his Heap of Troubles, and increase the Cause of his Disquietude, to know that he may enjoy them, and that he has not the Heart to do it ; he accounts all those Things among his Losses which he cannot acquire, and when he has any real ones, he is bereaved of all his Happiness, though he was never the nearer to it when he was in Possession. Was Felicity indeed to be procured with what he pants for, insatiable Thirst after it were commendable ; but if Wealth gives neither Content and Tranquillity to the Mind, nor Health to the Body, nor prolongs the Life of the Owner, what Benefit, in respect to either of them, is there in a great Deal more than in less ; that Little which the *righteous Man gets honestly*, and enjoys with Satisfaction to himself and others, is much better than great Riches of the *Ungodly*, which are too often kept to the Hurt of the Owners thereof. All Vice debases a Man, but this makes him a Slave to his own Servant.

But what increases the Wonder and the Madness, is that it should be most incident to old People ; when other Vices are forsaking them of their own Accord, that this should then find Admittance, and Men become guilty of the greatest Folly

Folly in the Years of greatest Prudence; that they should project to make the largest Provisions when they have but a little Way of the Journey of Life to travel; and when their Sun is about setting, prepare as if it was rising. *Ob Death, how bitter art thou to a Man that is at Rest in his Possession!* They seem to grasp their worldly Possessions the faster, the nearer they are to it. But nothing beside a good Conscience will be able to support them in that Day of Distress; they have had their Consolation, and their Portion in this Life, and nothing of either shall follow them beyond the Grave. *Riches profit nothing in the Day of Wrath,* but to increase the Doom. *Go to now, ye Rich, says St. James v. 1. &c. weep and howl, for your Misery is come upon you, your Riches are corrupted, your Garments are Moth-eaten, your Gold and Silver is cankered, the Rust of them will be a Witness against you, and shall eat your Flesh as it was Fire.*

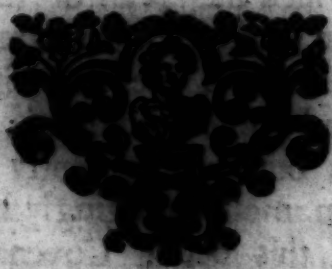
Should we ask, for whom now does the Miser thus pinch himself? Is it for his impatient Heir he is hoarding up Sin? *But who knows whether he that cometh after shall be a wise Man, or a Fool?* as says the Author of *Ecclesiastes*. The Curse of God always hovers over, and almost never fails, in Observation, to consume such ill-got Wealth in two or three Generations; and so Avarice is justly punished with Prodigality, the Thing it hated most in the World. *There is one, as the said wise Man observes, of whose Labour there is no End, who is not satisfied with Riches, neither saith he, For whom do I labour and bereave my Soul of Good? This must needs be Vanity, and a sore Evil.* And very often he who makes Injustice his Collector, and Parcimony his Treasurer and Keeper, shall leave his tasteless Plenty in the Midst of his Days, and in the End shall be a Fool: And then whose shall
all

A Dissuasive from Covetousness. 127

all those Things be, which cost him so much Disquiet? So much as, perhaps, to exclude himself from an Inheritance in the Things of God and of Christ, and render himself compleatly miserable, both here and hereafter.

Where is that Man's Wisdom who will damn himself for the Good of Posterity; and sell his Soul, and the Reversion of future Happiness, for a present Gain of certain Vanity and Vexation? for, it may be, the Turf of an Estate, a few Acres of Ground, or Houses, a Tenement, or a Purse of Money? When if Acquisition of the whole World could be obtained, that will not be able to recompense the Loss he is incurring: *For what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?*

Reflecting, therefore, on so much Folly, such Guilt, Sin, and Madness, as neither values the Enjoyment of this World, nor Hopes of a better; let us sum up in one Word and leave the Impression of all has been said in the double-guarded Caution of our blessed Lord; *Take Heed, and beware of Covetousness*: And, that we may remember it the better, let us not be wanting to pray also unto God to incline our Heart unto his Testimonies, and not unto Covetousness.



S E R.

~~THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT~~
The fourth Sunday in *Lent*.

S E R M O N

The Eighth.

The Facility of Christians Duty.

GALAT. iv. 31. [Conclusion of the Epistle
of this Day.]

*So then, Brethren, we are not Children of the Bond-
woman, but of the Free.*

THESE Words are the Conclusion of an Argument which is not very material for us to unravel particularly, who need none of the Conviction and Disuasion it carries with it. The Drift of it is to convince the *Jews* of the Liberty and Privileges of the Gospel Dispensation, which had been long promised in Types and Figures, but was now fulfilled and come unto them; and therefore the Apostle sets out very evidently the Disparity, and invites them most engagingly to embrace the Advantages of this better Covenant, and forsake the Burthen of that of Mount *Sinai*, which tended to Bondage.

St. Paul

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St. Paul likewise especially designs to dissuade the Judaizing *Galatians*, who had embraced the Christian Religion, from returning to that Yoke of which they were now happily freed; and from seeking Justification from that Law which could not justify the Observers of it: The Sense and Wisdom of such a Change and Return, by his Way of arguing, would be no other than to change from a Condition of perfect Freedom to that of heavy Bondage, from the Privilege of being *Sons* to the State of *Servants*.

You may read his Argument in the Verses before my Text, grounded upon an Allegory: The two very different States of the respective Mothers of the two Sons of *Abram* (the Father of their Nation) typified the as different Privileges of the Law and the Gospel. *Hagar*, the Bond-woman, represented the Former, a Covenant of Servitude; her Children those who were subject unto it: The Free-woman and Mistress of the House, *Sarah*, was an Emblem of the Gospel; and her Children (who were all the Children of Promise) equally concern us as well as the *Jews*. So then, Christian Brethren, we being *Children not of the Bond-woman, but of the Free*, let us survey and understand a little our own Privileges by considering;

- I. The comparative Excellence of the *Christian*, over the *Jewish*, Dispensation.
- II. The Easiness of the Terms it requires of us.

If we consider the first, we shall find Weakness and Imperfection is almost every where in Scripture imputed to the Law of *Moses*. To mention all the Defects alledged against it by St. Paul, who had studied it at the Feet of *Gama-liel*,

liel, and was perfectly well versed therein, would be to transcribe a great Part of his Writings, especially of this Epistle to the *Galatians*. And not only *he* accuses it of being weak and beggarly Elements; but the Prophet *Ezekiel*, one of its own Economy, characterises it with the Stile of *Statutes that were not good, and Judgments whereby the Observers could not live*: Given by God to the *Jews* as it were in the Way of Discipline for their Inclination to Idolatry, and for their many Back-slidings.

Its ritual Ceremonies, and various Injunctions, had in them no intrinsick Goodness to recommend them, and were only fit to be observed, because commanded of God; but could not, as says the Apostle, *make him who did the Service perfect, as pertaining to Conscience*; being rigorous in exacting perfect Obedience, yet not affording Encouragement and Assistance enough for it; upon which Account it is very deservedly stiled the *Ministration to Condemnation*. The numerous Ordinances seem to have been imposed on that stiff-necked People, to preserve them from the *Egyptian* and *Syrian* Idolatry, that the sacrificial Rites of Worship might be converted to the Service of the true God, and they brought up in Preparation for better Things to come at the Time of Reformation, *the Fulness of Time*, when old carnal ones were to be abolished, and changed into spiritual, by the Coming of Christ.

They had some rude Thoughts and confused Expectations of the spiritual Kingdom that was to ensue; and a hard Lesson it was to learn perfectly from that Schoolmaster the Law. What then many Prophets and Kings have desired to see, we Christians plainly discern by the glorious Light and Discoveries of the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, who is the Accomplishment, and the End of that Law to every one that believeth; who has
mended

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mended and explained the Covenant thereof, and established it on better Promises, and better Hopes. Not as if the Jewish and the Christian were two opposite, and properly distinct Covenants; but the same Covenant of Grace made upon the Fall of our first Parents, the same Church of God considered in different Respects, in various Ages and Periods of it, as at several Times it received from Heaven differing Privileges and Revelations of the divine Will. The Mediator of each was one and the same; one Hope, one Faith to both; the one in the Messiah to come, the other in the Messiah already come; the one free of, the other incumbered with Ordinances. Therefore our Lord rescinded all the ritual Obligations of the first, and brought in a Service that is entirely rational, pure, and perpetual, befitting rational Creatures to offer up to a God, who would be worshiped no longer in Shadows and Types, in a peculiar Manner, by a peculiar Inclosure of People, but in Spirit and Truth, in Freedom and in Love, in the Assistances of Immortality, and Assistances of the blessed Spirit, which are all the blessed and invaluable Privileges, in which this Christian Change of the Covenant transcends the other; Christianity being now, as I may say, the best and last Edition of the Covenant, with some Additions, and a great many Corrections.

The Law entered by Moses, but Grace and Truth by Jesus Christ; the first filled the Doers thereof with the Spirit of Bondage unto Fear; their Minds were disturbed with slavish Horrors, at the Necessity of incurring Guilt, and transgressing the Commandment, without sufficient Remedy; they knew the certain Curse of the Law, but not so well how to avoid it; but Christ has redeemed us from that Curse, that now, being under

the Gospel, we might receive the Promise of the Spirit: Whereas no express Promise was made in that of Moses, of the Aids and Succours of Grace (without which no Performance of Duty can be expected from the corrupt Nature of Man;) but the gracious Gospel of our Saviour has declared, that God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, Luke xi. 3. Where any such Intimations occur in the Old Testament, it is rather by way of Prophecy, what the other should, in due Time, enjoy of that Nature, when the Spirit should be poured upon all Flesh: Now, in Fact, all that will ask shall receive it; and all that will improve it shall receive more abundantly.

It is true, all who walked in the Commandment blameless, such conscientious Jews partaked of its holy Assistances; but it was more than was stipulated and engaged in the Mosaical Dispensation. The few to whom it was so graciously imparted, enjoyed it, not by Virtue of the Legal, but the Evangelical Covenant of Grace made with Adam, in Christ the Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and by Faith in him, who is the sole Righteousness of the Law, and the Justifier to Salvation; and that Covenant, by which the old Patriarchs, and holy Men after the Law were saved, was the spiritual one of Grace couched under the other, consisting of spiritual Promises and Duties, and virtually enjoined under the Precepts of outward Service; the latter of which killed, and drove to Despair, while the Spirit only gave Life and Hopes.

Hence the Obedience of the greater Part of the Jews was mercenary, actuated by a Principle of Fear and Consternation; the Scourge and Punishment of Disobedience always impending over their Heads, and ready to take Vengeance on the Offender;

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Offender ; their Work was toilsome, and their Wages small : But ours now proceeds, or should proceed, from more generous Motives, as inspired by Faith and Love. “ With the *Jews* God dealt as with Servants, and their chief Reason to obey that Institution was Fear and Dread ; but Christians are treated as Children ; *we cry Abba, Father* ; and the Motive to our Duty is Love. The Law was promulged with Curses and Denunciations of Wrath ; the Gospel recommends itself by a more generous and engaging Style, to gain upon the Hearts of its Profelytes by Promises of Blessedness : The Objects chiefly in View of the former were the divine Attributes of Justice and Power, whereby a refractory People might be frightened into good Manners : Those set before the latter are infinite Mercy and Goodness, whereby a free and ingenuous People, obliged beyond all Possibility of Requital, might yet be shamed into such Returns as they were capable of ; and powerfully excited to imitate those Excellencies, to which they were indebted for such glorious Hopes and Happiness ; and therefore their Invitations to Duty are like their Duty itself, in which there is nothing awful and servile, but all the Effect of filial Affection and Gratitude on the one Part ; all Tenderness and Indulgence on the other ; a Duty not imposed for the Ostentation of Authority, but for the Sake and Benefit of those who pay it, and therefore so disposed as to lay the Foundation of Obedience in a Sense and Conviction of the Advantages of it.

Our Business is made up of reasonable, easy Service, of all the Enjoyments of Freedom, that the Reason of Man can desire ; our Expectations are vast, beyond what we durst hope for, more than we could either ask or think ; our Encouragement and Promise being that of eternal Life,

and an ever-induring Inheritance in the Heavens: Whereas temporal Punishment, either of Sickness of Body, Famine, Pestilence, or the Miseries of War, great Insults of their Enemies, with other worldly Adversities, were the Sanctions to deter from the Breach of that Covenant, by which the Land of *Canaan* was held; and the contrary temporal Blessings and Rewards of Health, Plenty, Peace, and Victory were the most plain and express Encouragements and Motives to promote Obedience, and excite and multiply the Performers of it. As to Overtures of Life eternal, they were but covertly insinuated, and logically implicated in Premises, without having the Conclusion drawn for them. Thus when our Saviour himself was to prove the Resurrection, and the future Life, out of their Law, how did he it but from that Part of the Scripture which was acknowledged by the Querists, by an Argument that involved a good deal of Consideration and Inference before it could persuade the Populace? As when he urges that Passage, *I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, to evince that there is a future State, and that God is not *the God of the Dead, but of the Living*. The Recompences and Possessions of the Jews were like a Tract of Land made over to them, which had in it latent Mines of inestimable Treasure, which the Gospel has broke up, and discovered evidently, whose glorious Preheminence it is to *bring Life and Immortality to Light*, and proffer it in sure and certain Hopes, and upon vastly easier Terms and Conditions, to the sincere Performers of them; and temporal good Things are superadded, as secondary additional Encouragements to the Christian Duty, according as their Tendency will be more or less for our main and spiritual Good: *Seek first the Kingdom of God,*

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and his Righteousness, and all these Things shall be added to you, says the Law-giver of Grace and Truth to his Followers.

The more express Recompences of the first Covenant were mean and low, unsuitable to the Capacities, and unworthy of the Complacency of a reasonable Soul; for, by those of the latter only, it will be filled and delighted, ennobled and exalted: So that we have great Reason to rejoice, that we are *Children, not of the Bond-woman, but of the Free*; that we have the Aids of the Holy Spirit waiting on us to help and assist; and the Assurances of eternal Bliss and Glory, to invite us to our engaging Duty.

The Yoke of Christ is easy, and his Burthen light, in Comparison of that other, which none of the Seed of *Jacob* were able to bear. His Gospel, as a Rule of Manners, must indeed be acknowledged to be much stricter than the Law of *Moses*, (extending its Obligations even to the Thoughts of the Heart;) but considered as a Covenant, it is not near so severe; but is very tender, and very favourable to those who offend and come short, not out of malicious Wickedness: For by this merciful Standard he is judged to do all the Will of God, or equivalent to all, who does what he does with an upright Heart, who unfeignedly strives to do more, and when he does most, is grieved that he does so little. Here true Repentance passes for Performance, because it will, and does grow up to it; and a sincere Performance is taken for Perfection, because it unfeignedly endeavours it.

Christ is so far, however, from superseding the Necessity of Repentance and good Works, that he designed only to make way for the Success of them: He did so much, that they might not be in vain; and did no more, that they might not be

be needless: By them we shall obtain Mercy, but not without them. And therefore it was a false and scandalous Imputation that *Julian* the Apostate laid to the Charge of Christianity, as if it gave Encouragement to Sin, by assuring its most desperate Profelytes of an easy Pardon; whereupon he ludicrously invites "Whoever is an Idolater, or most profligate Liver, to embrace it." True, it speaks the greatest Comfort to the greatest of Sinners, but gives not the least Encouragement to the smallest wilful Sin; and tho' in good Actions the Deed is commended, where we have the Opportunity, yet the Will is often accepted for it, by him who both *makes us to will and to do of his own good Pleasure.*

Under the severe Task-master of the Law the Task was rigorously exacted, yet was less Provision made for Help to aid, or Strength to sustain, or Reward to encourage the Doers of it: Under the Gospel, tho' much more is to be done, and some new Commands put in Practice, yet the Work itself is much more feasible: If we will labour in good earnest our Infirmities will be supported, our Temptations conquerable, our Sins forgiven, our spiritual Enemies subdued, and heavenly Grace bestowed by him, whose *Grace is sufficient for us.* So powerful and almighty is the divine Assistance, that the Strength of Men's Passions, or the Weakness of corrupt Nature, are frivolous Pretences, false, dishonourable Excuses, detracting from the Merits of Christ, and the Efficacy of his strengthening Grace, as often as any urge the Difficulties and Impracticableness of our Christian Duty, as a Plea for Non-performance: For if *God be with us, who can be against us? Greater, sure, is he that is in us, than he that is without us.* The Wiles and Stratagems of the Devil can never be able to stand against the
Wisdom

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Wisdom that cometh from above; and, provided we are but tractable to improve and cultivate its Motions, in all Struggles and Oppositions, we shall be effectually Conquerors over him.

Difficulty in any Action is only a relative Object, in Comparison to the Strength and Ability of him that undertakes it: A small Burthen is insuperable to a Child, which yet is light and easy to a Man of Stature; so we are first Children in Christ, and as we grow up to *the Fulness and Stature* of him, our spiritual Strength grows with us. "Tho' we fall sometimes, provided we make speedy Efforts to rise again, our Saviour kindly takes us by the Hand; and while he chides and upbraids our Negligence, pities and relieves our Misfortunes, and cautions us against the like Inadvertency for the future. He knows we can do nothing of ourselves, and therefore is always ready to afford us the necessary Succours of his Grace: And to shew his constant Care and Vigilance over our Souls, he delights to represent it by the Emblem of the good Shepherd, that feeds, and guides, and governs his Flock; that defends them from being a Prey to wild Beasts; that teaches them to *know his Voice*, and obey his Motion; and, according to their respective Wants, provides for their Ease, Convenience, and Safety. What have we fear under the Protection and Guidance of such a kind Shepherd? What to despair of under his Advice, Conduct, and Example? Every Excuse and Pretence of Inability to acquit ourselves must lie altogether at the Door of our own Unwillingness, and will only turn one Day to our insupportable Shame, and Confusion of Face.

In the next Place, if we take also into Consideration the Immensity of the Reward to our Obedience, and Dreadfulness of the Punishment upon the

the Transgressor of these righteous Laws of Christ, the Objection of Difficulty must cease, and all Mouths be stopped: For, supposing the Difficulties and Uneasiness greater than they are, are they not worth the encountering for such a Crown of Glory? What Pains can be great enough for such a Reward? Is not Heaven a sufficient Recompence and Exchange for Martyrdom, and the bitterest of Sufferings? Shall our *Sufferings, which are but for a Moment, be compared to that eternal and exceeding Weight of Glory, which shall be revealed?* as the Apostle rightly comforts those that are under Affliction. If Heaven is the promised End of our Cares and Fears, and the Beginning of Joy without End, there can be no higher Reason for our Resignation, nor a more potent Cordial devised, to support the desponding Mind; and if Endurance here will heighten its Advancement hereafter, it will have Reason, upon second Thoughts, in respect to the last Issue, rather to welcome all the Affliction that can happen. Shall a rational Man toil and drudge, rise early, and late take Rest, for a small Pittance of this World's Portion, that will be sure to disappoint his Expectation, that may soon be wrested from his Possession, by various Casualties; or he himself taken away sooner from that, by certain Death; and not use some Endeavours of his Industry and Diligence, to attain a more enduring Substance in a better World, not comprehensible for its Greatness; and, for its Duration, only equal to Eternity? Shall he do almost any thing to shun temporal Pain; endure a less to avoid a greater? And does he believe also eternal Punishment to come, yet not undergo some Fear and Trembling to work his Escape and Deliverance from it?

What

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What would not one of those undone Souls do, who are now reaping the Fruits of their former Sloth and Laziness, what would they not undergo to procure but one Drop of Ease, or ever so little a Mitigation from the increasing Pain? How oft would they go through all the arduous Duties with Alacrity and Chearfulness? Make the easy Yoke very hard, make the light Burden ever so heavy, as hard, as heavy as the *Jewish* Bondage itself; they shall be done; they would be undertaken with all the Heart, with all the Soul, with all the Might, and with all the Strength, if that would deliver from that unbearable Place of Torment. Let then the Example of those before us, who were once averse to the Troubles of bearing an easy Yoke, a light Burden, and now taste the Folly of it too late, teach us, who are alive, the true Wisdom of shewing the Value we set on our Privilege, and the present Satisfaction we ought to take in the Terms of our Duty, by complying with them.

Besides the high Prize of our Calling is of Worth sufficient (one would think) to inspirit the most Stupid, and give Speed and Agility to the Feeblest of all to strive that Striving which will be sure to reach it: But let them be assured of this one Thing, that it will not prostitute itself to the cheap and easy Endeavours of the Slothful; no, it is to be won only by Assiduity and Diligence, Perseverance in the Ways of Duty and Works of our Calling, which brings besides the present Reward down in Hand of Pleasure and Tranquillity of Mind, in the Conscience of doing what was its Duty, and the joyful Communications and Refreshments of the divine Spirit; as likewise the present Conveniency and Benefit towards carrying on our worldly Affairs.

Let

Let but a good Man attend as much to his Conduct and Actions, as a Courtier does who would keep himself in Favour, or as one who would pass in the World for an honest Man, he will perform almost all that Diligence which the Christian Religion requires of him. To shun some Occasions, to avoid some Companies, to forbear some particular Ways, are not Cautions peculiar to Christianity; let a Man, in cool Thoughts, run over all the Christian Laws and Injunctions, and he will find they scarce require any Thing but what honest Men already do, or would be capable of doing, without any other Motive but that of Honesty, of Interest, or of Repose in this World: A Christian Motive wisely prosecuted and consulted would not render those Actions more painful and difficult than worldly Inducements do; and a Man may easily conceive, that, when he is capable of doing daily, without Christ, such difficult Things as the World requires of him, he will be capable, with him, to perform whatever hard Obligations his Religion may lay upon him; and I hope, while he is well consulting and wisely carrying on his honest Designs in this World, by the Christian Care and Methods of a good Conscience, it will be an agreeable Balance, at the Foot of his Accounts, to find Heaven at the End of his Days, as it will be, provided it is the first and chief Object of his Thoughts and Actions here. But, as to the Wages of Sin, they are doubly miserable, and the Service incomparably harder; the Ways of it Intricacy, Uncertainty, and Dissimulation; and Men run through Darkness, Trouble, Sorrow, Pain, Sickness, Disquietude of Mind, and misgiving Thoughts, and relenting Pleasures, before they perfect it and fill up the Measure of their Iniquity; so true is it that *he that committeth Sin is the Servant of Sin.*

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If Men would but taste and see, they would in a short Space of Time perceive the *Ways* of Virtue to be *pleasant*, its *Yoke easy*, and its *Commandments* not to be *grievous*; though it is as hard a Matter to convince a Man that is resolved against the Experiment of the Truth of this, as it would be for him to understand by Description what Honey was, and the Honey-Comb, who had never tasted thereof. Yet are we assured, from those who have much experienced them, concerning the Commands of God, and the Conscience of keeping them, that they are sweeter than either.

It is not to be denied that the first Entrance upon Vertue, through the Gate of Repentance, is troublesome and uneasy. All the Pain is in first tearing off our Wills from the vain sinful Objects they have so long lived and been accustomed to; tho' it is revivingly better at the same Time, and very profitable: After that, it grows easier and more pleasant; and it is to be noted, that those distastful Predictions of Tribulation and Suffering, so shocking to Flesh and Blood, regarded chiefly the primitive Times of Christianity, which were under Persecution, and not the ordinary Circumstances of us: So that our Faith and Constancy is not like to be assayed much this Way.

But farther still, in the *Third Place*, if Men and Sinners will not be influenced by future Rewards, nor desire to be assisted by the Aids of Grace, to do that Duty they have no Mind to set about, they must, however, acknowledge the Reasonableness of the Precepts of Christianity, and so condemn themselves of Negligence out of their own Mouths. If it is natural to our Reason, whatever is natural is easy; and the Laws of the Gospel are plainly our own Laws, enacted by our own Consciences; and the Voice of Religion consents, that the *Law is holy, just, and good*. The divine
Sermon

Sermon upon the Mount, which was the first and principal Lecture of it, is in itself so well adapted to the Rule of Life and right Reason, that the Precepts thereof must needs carry self-evident Authority; to all who read them; to those who obey them from the firm Satisfaction which they inspire; to those who neglect them from the Anxiety that naturally attends the contrary Practice. What more reasonable, as well as beneficial, than the Laws of Justice and Charity, of doing as we would be done by? than the Laws of Temperance and Sobriety towards our selves; and of Piety and Worship towards God, our Creator? And what does the Grace of the Gospel require of us, but that, *denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World?* What more reasonable than Sorrow and Repentance, for having offended, and resolving to do better for the future? What more equitable than Restitution? And what more becoming a Man than the Government of his Passions and Appetites? Even the Command of loving our Enemies is of that reasonable Nature; for, certainly, he consults his Reason and Ease, who strives to forget an Injury, more than he who suffers the Remembrance of it to broil perpetually in his Mind, to his own Self-Torment. How much more pleasant to live in Peace, than to be jarring and quarrelling with our Neighbours? Wrath is embroiled with many Troubles; Meekness with none: Pride is ever contemned and hated; whilst Love and Esteem attend Humility in all Places. What a tormenting Thing is Envy, and what Destruction to Health, Wealth, and Credit, does Drunkenness and all other Debaucheries occasion?

How causelessly does that Child complain of his Father's Harshness, who has nothing else to

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say of him, but that he will not suffer him to affront and condemn him, to hurt or injure himself, or beat and abuse his Brother? Abstain but from dishonoring God, from wronging our Neighbour, from ruining ourselves, and there is nothing else to be debarred from. What do his Commands require but what is rational and perfective of our Nature? Nothing but what wise, ingenious People, in their deliberate Thoughts would chuse, if there was neither Heaven nor Hell hereafter. Our Yoke is Ornament, our Obligations all Privileges, and we free, in the Midst of all the Precepts, from every Thing that the Reason of Man should desire, Such Liberty as Angels before the Throne, as the eternal God himself has, none of whom have Liberty to do Evil, just such Liberty is allowed to us.

Upon a Survey then of the Whole, if we have *Respect unto the Recompence of Reward*, the Precepts and Obligations upon us are no more burdensome than if we carried valuable Burdens of precious Crowns, which at the End of our Journey shall be all our own; and it may be but a short Way we have to carry them neither.

If we, *lastly*, remember the reasonable Nature of the Performances incumbent on us, they are no more than as Feathers upon the Wing of a Bird, which do not load but help in Motion. And sure we shall forge no Excuse hereafter from any pretended Difficulty: All dilatory Pretences must, and can be resolved into nothing but our own Sloth; we despair purely out of Idleness, and it is mere Laziness that makes us think the Work hard; as lazy People object against, and would excuse themselves from every little Labour.

In a Word, if we do but think of our Privileges, of our Encouragements, of our Helps, and of the Patterns that have gone before us, we shall be

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be inexcusable to God and Man for our Neglect of such easy, rational, beneficial, and free Service.

“ Lord God, give us Grace seriously to consider, heartily to be thankful for, conscientiously to improve, and to live worthy of such Advantages; that we, who call ourselves Christians, may be so much more thy People in all holy Obedience, as thou art so much more our God in the Distinctions of thy Bounty and Favour, than any others which were ever called by thy Name. So as thou vouchsafest at present to guide us by the Counsel of thy Spirit, thou shalt advance us from Grace to Grace, and after that receive us into Glory, for his Sake who purchased both Grace and Glory for all them who do thy Will, thy dear Son *Christ*.”



S E R

For the 5th Sunday in *Lent*.

S E R M O N

The Ninth.

*The 2 Covenants stated : Advantages
of the Second.*

*The Office of Christ the Mediator.
His Satisfaction for Sins.*

Some practical Inferences.

HEB. ix. 15. The Conclusion of the Epistle of
this Day.

*For this Cause he is the Mediator of the New Test-
ament, that by Means of Death for the Redemp-
tion of the Transgressions, that were under the
first Testament, they which are called, might re-
ceive the Promise of eternal Life.*

THE original Word which, in this
Verse, is translated Testament, is in
the former Chapter several Times
rendered Covenant, which is indeed
the true Signification of the Word in this Place,
as well as the other, and in both denotes one
and the same Thing. The 1st Testament there-
fore, in my Text, is the 1st, or Old Covenant, as
it is termed in the last Verse of the former Chapter,
that which God first made with Man after his Cre-
ation :

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ation: Which being broken by the Fall of our first Parents, and all Mankind thereby involved under Sin, and become liable to Death temporal and eternal for the Punishment of it; that we might not all perish in this inconsolable Condemnation, our Saviour Christ undertook to make up the Breach between God and us, and purchase for us another Covenant with him; and, in order to it, offered himself to come into this World and take upon him the human Nature, and to die in our stead, that full Satisfaction being made to God for the Guilt of all our Iniquities, he might fully reconcile us again to him, and recover and redeem us to that eternal Inheritance which was forfeited under the first Covenant. And this being what Christ proposed for the Accomplishment of the Mediation, which he undertook between God and Man; it is said in the Text *for this Cause*, i. e. for this End and Purpose, *is Christ the Mediator of the new Covenant*, that, being born into the World, and dying for us, he might ransom us both from the Guilt and Punishment contracted by the Transgression of the first, and reinstate us anew to the Title of eternal Life, by his Blood-shedding, which speaketh better Things than that of *Abel*: For if *Abel* the first and most antient Type of Christ, obtained Witness (as the Apostle affirms, Chapter xi. ver. 4. of this Epistle) from his offering *by Faith a more excellent Sacrifice than Cain*, that he was more righteous, God testifying of his Gifts; and by it, he being dead, yet speaketh: ought not the Blood-shedding of the Son of God to speak better and more edifying Things? And not only speak, but be heard, and considered seriously by all that have Ears to hear?

The Words under Audience fairly suggest to our profitable Meditation these following Particulars.

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I. What

- I. What this 1st and old Covenant was.
- II. The Condition into which Mankind fell, by the Breach of it.
- III. Who was the Mediator for the obtaining a new and 2d Covenant.
- IV. The great Mercy of God in granting it.
- V. What are the Nature and Condition of it.
- VI. The Means whereby it was obtained, the Death of the Mediator.
- VII. And *lastly*, The inestimable Benefit we receive thereby.

Suffer me with the greater Plainness to open these Things in Order; because I would now address my self chiefly to the more ignorant Sort: Many of whom I have found by Discourse, and believe there may be more, exceeding ignorant of the Scheme and Method of their Redemption, and who carelessly keep themselves unacquainted with the most important Truths which concern their everlasting Salvation. And as such Ignorance is most dangerous and inexcusable in the Opportunities of so much Knowledge, so will it the more especially deserve their heedful Attention at this Time; and the more-knowing, may also be reminded of Meditation on these momentous Things, as the Time of the Sufferings of the great Mediator of the Covenant draws near.

Let us then, with the Plainness that was proposed, begin with the

I. Particular ; What this first, or old Covenant was.

It was no other than that which God first made with Man in Paradise : There, when Man and Woman came fresh created out of their Maker's Hand, God imprinted on their Minds an exact and clear Knowledge of the Law they were to observe ; and, having giving them an entire, perfect, and sufficient Rectitude of Will to have kept it, if they would, he peremptorily required from them a perfect, entire, and unfinning Obedience ; with the Promise of everlasting Bliss on their Perseverance, on one Hand ; and the Threat of temporal and eternal Death for their Breach of it, on the other. This is what we call the *first Covenant*, which we having broken in our first Parents *Adam* and *Eve*, (who were the moral as well as the natural Head of our human Race) we both lost that State of Bliss God placed us in, and the Expectation of much greater in Heaven ; and incurred moreover the Condemnation of eternal Death threatened us thereby. This was the Condition we fell into by the Breach of this Covenant, which was the

II. Point proposed ; and a miserable and most dismal one it was : Because, by it, God and Man became utterly estranged each from the other ; new-made Man from his recent Maker, and God from Man his Creature, the newest and best Work of his Hands.

Man became first estranged from God ; inasmuch as, by this Transgression, having cast off all Obedience and Allegiance to him, he became an utter Rebel to his Maker ; and such a Rebel, as it remained impossible for him, of himself, ever to be otherwise. For by this original Sin having darkened that Light of his own Understanding and Idea of the Divine Attributes, which God

God at first gave him to discern and know his Law; and also corrupted the Integrity of his Will, whereby he was fully empowered to keep it, he thenceforth became depraved in all and every his Faculties; so that ever after the Thoughts of his Heart, and the whole Bent of his Mind being vitiated, and depraved, it was no more in his Power to observe the Righteousness, or pay that Obedience to the Law of his God, which he required from him; and therefore it became impossible for him to render himself by Obedience acceptable to him, or ever after have any more Communion with him.

In the next Place, as this Fall estranged Man from God, so it did also God from his sinful, polluted Deserter, Man, by totally alienating both his Mercy and his Favour from him: For, when Man had thus corrupted his Ways, the all-righteous and all-holy God could no more look upon him but with the Eyes of Wrath and Indignation for his presumptuous Transgression against him. He was made only for the Honour and Glory of his Creator, which was to shine forth, as in a living Picture, by the Righteousness of his Life and the Purity of his Conversation before him; but that being stained and polluted by Sin, he thereby disappointed the very Reason of his Being, in dishonouring him that created him; and so compleatly forfeited his Favour; and, being cast off by him, like the *Angels who kept not their first Estate*, he must, like them, (had not Help intervened) have perished for ever, and been *laid up in Chains to the Judgment of that great Day*.

But III. To deliver us from this terrible Condemnation, our most gracious and merciful Saviour interposed to make up the Rupture, and restore us again into Covenant with God. And hence is it, that he is here, in my Text, called

the Mediator of the New Covenant, because it was by his Mediation only, that this gracious Covenant was obtained for us, and God and Man again reconciled: For, Man being alienated from God in Obedience, and God from Man in Favour and Mercy, our blessed Saviour, by this his Mediation, brought back Man again to pay his best Obedience to his God and Maker, and God again to shew Mercy, and have his wonted Communion with Man. The Terms whereon this Reconciliation was made, is that new Covenant here mentioned in my Text. The Nature of which is now, in the

IV. *Place*, to be explained: Which Consisting (as the Nature of all other Covenants do) in the Terms on which it was conceded, the shewing what those Terms and Conditions are will fully clear this Particular. Now the Terms of all Covenants, especially such as are made between a Superior and his Inferiors, as between a Lord and his Vassals (which is the Nature of the Engagement we treat of) consists of Grants and Concessions, Privileges and Promises, made on the one Side, and Conditions required on the other. Thus the first Covenant which God made with them in *Paradise* had its Grants and its Conditions. The Grants on God's Part, were the continuing of Man in the State he first placed him in, for the Time appointed for his Trial and Probation, and, after that, advancing him to a higher State of Bliss and Glory in the Heavens.

The Condition required on Man's Part, was to pay an entire Obedience to the whole Will of his God, and persevere therein, without Failure or Trespas, unto the End. But Man, having violated these Conditions in his eating the forbidden Fruit, forfeited all his Rights to those Grants and Promises, and would for ever have been excluded all
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Prétence or Title to them, to his everlasting Undoing, had not God, thro' the Mediation of his Son, our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, of his infinite Mercy been pleased to be satisfied, and enter anew into Agreement and Covenant with us.

And praised be his Goodness and Mercy for ever! a most gracious and merciful one it is, not only in the Favour and Condescension of entering into, but also in all and every the Terms of it: Which all and singular of them, in the highest Degree, speak forth the *exceeding Riches* of divine Mercy and Goodness in the Affair; seeing, in such Circumstances of open Rebellion against him, he would be pleased to vouchsafe us such Conditions. For, though in this Case, any Grant of Favour, any the least Concession of Mercy, must have been welcomed by us, as more than we deserved, though vastly below the Value of what we forfeited before; yet God, of his infinite Goodness, did not in the least diminish one of the spiritual Advantages from it, but, in this latter Covenant, hath again made over to us the same Grants which we so unworthily forfeited by the Breach of the Former, in as full, in as ample a Manner as at first were propounded, *i. e.* the same Consummation of Bliss and Glory in the Kingdom of Heaven, and the same Confirmation therein to all Eternity, which was to have been our future Reward had we continued in our primitive Innocency: And that also, moreover, on the most gracious and easy Conditions to be performed on our Part we possibly could expect, or desire, which are none other than Faith, and Repentance. *i. e.* that we truly believe in him who, by his Mediation, obtained this Covenant for us; and, by Vertue of that Belief, be influenced to turn from our evil Ways, and, with the best of

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our Endeavours, and imperfect Obedience, apply ourselves to perform that Righteousness which in his Gospel he hath prescribed unto us. And there is no Man, how profligate soever his former Life hath been, how great soever the Kind or Number of his past Iniquities, but shall, on the Performance of these easy Conditions be received into this blessed Covenant, and be most certainly entitled to all the gracious Promises and Grants of it.

Had God restored us into Covenant with himself upon the Condition of the first, those rigid ones of perfect and unfinning Obedience, in this lapsed State of ours, it would have been of no Benefit at all to us; because that Clearness and Discernment of Mind to know the Law of God, and that Rectitude of Will to conform thereunto (which was our Privilege under the first Covenant) being now corrupted and degenerated by the Fall, it is utterly impracticable for any of us, in this State of Corruption, to be perfectly righteous or holy in our Conversation in this World. And therefore God, of his great Mercy and Wisdom, having regard to the Infirmities of our lapsed Nature, adapted the Condition of this Covenant, not according to what was in Justice due unto him, but only according to what we are able to perform. It is not therefore a rigid, exact and punctual Observance of all we ought to do, which God requires now from us to entitle us to the Mercies and Benefits of this Covenant; but only that we have true Faith in him that purchased this Covenant for us, and apply ourselves with a most hearty and sincere Endeavour to order our Lives and Conversation, according to its holy Directions, which is the only undoubted Sign of such a Faith, and all the saving Virtue of it. And though this is far short of
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that true and perfect Righteousness, which so great a promised Reward may seem really to demand, yet it shall be accepted of for such, and all wherein it is deficient, be made up by the perfect Obedience of our Saviour's Life, and all sufficient Merits of those Sufferings whereby he, that was Mediator of this Covenant, purchased it for us: Besides the Benefits that flow from the Sense and Experience of God's Love, and Christ, his Son's, Rule over us, and in the Ordinances of Communion with the Father and Son.

There is likewise one other most advantageous Benefit which the second Covenant restores us; *i. e.* the Aids, Assistances, and Comforts of God's Holy Spirit, which, being forfeited by the Disobedience of the first *Adam*, are again recovered by the Satisfaction of Christ, the second *Adam*. The First brought in the Dominion of Sin; the Second took it away, together with the Guilt thereof: And, as the Influences of God's Grace were sufficiently afforded, and suited to the uncorrupted Nature of our first Parents, so as to have preserved them in Innocency, had they, in Will, complied therewith; so are they now as aiding, and as effectual to promote all that Obedience which is required from our natural Powers, in the present State of their Weakness and Imbecility, and to sanctify it also, and to reward our Improvements in his Graces, by larger Communications of himself, and Participations of the divine Nature, if we are but sufficiently willing and desirous of his Guidance, and do not prove refractory to his godly Motions.

This invaluable Benefit, tho' afforded to many, yet was obscurely, at least, if at all as a Right, promised under the Law of *Moses*, and only given in Virtue of Christ, the Substance that was to come; but is now, since his coming, together

ther with eternal Life, become an explicit Promise and Privilege of the Gospel : *The Law came by Moses, but Grace and Truth by Jesus Christ.*

Having explained the Nature of the second Covenant, I now proceed to the next, and

Vth Particular : To shew the great Mercy of God in granting it to us ; for it is indeed all over Mercy ; in its Grants, Privileges, and Promises, Mercy ; in the Easiness of the Condition, Mercy : And again, Mercy in the Assistance for performing them : For without that Assistance, proportioned to our acquired Debility, to have made Grants, Promises, and Conditions to our Nature, weak and impotent of the Performance, would, instead of a Favour, have been no better than insulting our Misfortunes.

Nor is it a vulgar Favour, tho' vulgarly esteemed of, to have that granted to us, which is denied to so many Myriads of People ; the plain and express Revelation of the Terms and Conditions to be observed on our Part, as Rules of our Behaviour : For it is only upon our Consciousness of performing these, that we could, as we now may, have Comfort and Assurance of eternal Reward, and make a Judgment of our Hopes, and Title to it ; for, having these, we have a Measure and Ground for our Hope, of which we must otherwise have been destitute.

Tho' it is purchased with a Price, yet great is the Mercy of God in granting it, even on these Terms ; for he might have chose whether he would have accepted the Price or not ; but when Man had fallen into the Breach of the first Covenant, and made himself liable to eternal Destruction, God might have exacted the Punishment in the very Kind wherein it was due, and refused all other Satisfaction, how equivalent and compensative

penfative foever, in its ftead. And therefore, tho' it was Chrift that redeemed us, yet it was the Mercy of God that accepted that Ransom for us; and, on this Account, exempted us from that eternal Death, which, for our Transgreffions, was due unto us.

But the Merety of God, in this Covenant, will chiefly appear under the enfuing, and

VIth Head of Difcourfe; wherein I propofed to fhew what were the Means of Mediation, whereby it was obtained for us. And thefe were no lefs than the Son of God descending from the Bosom of his Father, to fuffer for us, in that Nature which had finned: For God, of his unfpeakable Mercy, did not only confent to accept of an Equivalent in our ftead, that Satisfaction might be made for our Sins, and we delivered from the Condemnation due to them; but alfo, when no other fufficient Price or Reparation could be found throughout the Univerfe to do this, gave his only Son to be born of a Virgin, and to die upon the Crofs for the Accomplishment of it; the *juft for the unjuft*, the innocent for the guilty, the only begotten, and moft dearly beloved Son, for wicked and rebellious Servants; him that ever deferved the higheft Love, for them that deferved nothing but Damnation. And can any of us do lefs, when we confider all this, than adore, with all Thankfulnefs of Heart and Soul, the ineffable Riches of God's Mercy and Goodnefs, which he hath fo abundantly fhewn for us Men, and for our Salvation?

But more fully to explain the Means whereby our Mediator reconciled God to Man, and brought us anew into Covenant with him, I am to remind you, that, by our violating the firft Covenant, a Breach was made between God and Man,

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i. e. Man, through a Depravation of his Nature, became alienated in Service and Obedience ; and God, in just Resentment of his Rebellion, withdrew his Favours from him : Now, to make up this Enmity, and effect a thorough Reconciliation, there were two Tasks, or Offices, incumbent on our Mediator ; one to reconcile Man to God, the other to reconcile God to Man. In order to the first, it was necessary that Man should be made sensible of his Duty and Obligation to God, and again brought back to pay it by an acceptable Performance of his Laws : And, on his accomplishing this first Part of Mediation, was it only possible for our Saviour to go through with the second, in reconciling God to Man, in the Exhibitions of his wonted Loving-kindness : For it is impossible God can ever be reconciled to sinful Man, till he forsake his Sins, and again return unto his Duty, and that Obedience which is due unto his Maker.

For the thorough effecting both these Parts of his Mediation, our Saviour undertook these three Offices so often ascribed to him in Scripture, and which are all signified by his Name *Christ*, or the *Anointed*, *i. e.* his Prophetick, his Sacerdotal, and his Regal Office : For to all these, under the *Jewish* Economy, Admission was given by Unction, or the anointing with Oil : And, by way of Allusion to this, (as I take it) because Christians in general partake of the Unction of the Blessed Spirit, they are therefore in the New Testament stiled *Kings* and *Priests*, but no where *Prophets*, because that was reserved to a particular Order of Men : For this Reason is our Saviour, in an especial Manner, called *Christ*, or the *Anointed*, because he took on him all these Offices in the Work of our Redemption ; although his anointing, at his Entrance on them, was not with material

material Oil, but with the *Holy Ghost*, and with *Power*. Now, of these three Offices, *Prophet*, *Priest*, and *King*, the first and last he executed in order to reconcile Man to God; and the other, that is his sacerdotal, or being a High Priest, to reconcile God to Man, in offering up such a Sacrifice unto him, as might make a full and sufficient Atonement for all the Transgressions we have committed against him.

For, first, in order to reconcile Man to God, and convert him to his bounden Duty and Service, it was necessary to enlighten his Understanding, which, by the Fall, was darkened and confused, and retained but imperfect Ideas of God, or his Attributes; make him again acquainted with the perfect Rule of his Duty, and also incline him sufficiently to the Observance of it. For this Purpose our Saviour undertook the Prophetick Office, to instruct him perfectly in the Will of his God; it being the Office of a Prophet, as well to teach and instruct, as to foretel Things to come. The Law of *Moses's* Revelation was the *Schoolmaster that brought us to Christ*, by low inceptive Elements and Discoveries, by predictive Rites and Ceremonies, suited to the Circumstances of those Times, and the Genius of the *Jewish Nation*. But now Christ, *the Resurrection of the Life to come*, is come into the World, the New Testament, which was veiled in the Old, is explained unto us. For the Covenant of the Law by *Moses* was still the old Covenant ritualised, and put into an actual Lineage and Preparation for the Birth of the Mediator of the ensuing better Covenant. The Sanction of that indeed was, *Do this, and thou shalt live*: But in the Sacrifices for the Propitiation of Sin, there was the Seed of the Gospel, the Blood of Christ, not only sown, but visibly sprouted up. The Love
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of God and our Neighbour was the old Christian Patriarchal Way of entering into Life; and the ten Commandments, which were but so many particular Directions of the same Thing, was the *Israelitish* Way of entering into Life eternal; as our Saviour told the young Man. While the *Mosaic* Statutes and Judgments, the special Polity of Rites, and the peculiar Ordinances of Ceremonies terminated in this Life; the other moral Law respected the Life to come, as Conditions of the implicated Covenant of Grace, whereby the *Jews* were to be saved. We understand the Reasons of that temporary Law, and the Abolishment of it, and are educated in the Administration of Light and Truth, of Spirit and Substance; instead of the Darkness and Fables of the *Gentiles*, the Pride and Weakness of human Wisdom, or the burthensome Ceremonies and Shadows of the *Jews*.

This is the antient Christianity, or second Covenant, which ensued immediately after the Fall in Paradise, by Virtue of the Mediator; then indeed promised under the Words of *the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's Head*; but reserved, in the Womb of distant Time, to become explicit and revealed. And so it pleased the manifold Wisdom of God, by various Steps and Degrees, to carry on this Design, for the Space of about 4000 Years, before the Fulness of Time came that it should be compleated, and brought to Perfection, in the Messiah's actual Advent, to whom *all the Propbets gave Witness*: The Prophecies and the Gospel, the 53^d Chapter of *Isaiab* fore-telling, and the Evangelical History relating the actual Sufferings of him, answering one to another: And when the Light and Desire of the *Gentile* World, that is, our Saviour and Mediator *Jesus Christ*, emptied him-
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self, and descended from his own Seat in the everlasting Bosom of all Glory and Blessedness, into this miserable World, for the Instruction and Redemption of it, all was cleared up: And his being ushered in with so much previous Solemnity, and for so long Time, is it not a sensible Demonstration that this *great Mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the Flesh*, was the Master-piece of divine Wisdom, as well as the utmost Effort of Love and Goodness; and that all the lesser Dispensations of Providence were subservient to that great End? Thus the Scripture stiles *Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God*; as if in Christ, and his Sufferings on the Cross, might be summed up all the Power and Wisdom of God.

And now we Christians have the Favour which many Prophets and righteous Men desired in vain, to see the full Revelation of the *Seed of the Woman bruising the Serpent's Head*, in the blessed Gospel of Christ, which would have all Men believe and repent, and know *the Way and the Truth*; and lift us up again after our original Fall, and recover the Image of God again, which was lost. True it is, the Desire of Knowledge, and of Happiness, is in corrupt Man by Nature; but Sufficiency for it is not in him: Therefore are we enlightened by the Directions of God; it is he that will shew us any Good, even *his Christ*, in whom were all *the Treasures of Wisdom*, to shew us the acceptable Way of pleasing God, and being happy with him: *For this End was he born into the World*, (as he says himself) to bear Witness to those Truths, and to other Truths of the State of his Church and Kingdom, yet to be fulfilled. Thus discharged he the Office of Prophet.

2dly,

2dly, He took upon him that of *King*: He confessed, and denied not, that he was a King before *Pilate*; but that he, or his Master, the *Roman* Emperor, need have no Concern or Jealousy at that; *his Kingdom was not of this World, his Sceptre was a Sceptre of Righteousness*: His Laws indeed are most preservative of the Peace and good Order of this World, but their Aim is to guide us to Heaven; their Sanction, *i. e.* the Rewards and Punishments annexed to them, are laid in another Life, where they have their full Scope. And, as a Sovereign King, invested by the Father with Rule and Dominion over this World, upon his Ascension from it, he now governs and influences Men to the Observance of his Laws; and has left behind, and recorded in Writing, his Royal Proclamation of the *glad Tidings of the Gospel*, which contains an Act of Grace and general Pardon to all that will cease their Rebellion and Enmity, and come in and accept of the Terms, and perform the Conditions before the limited Time of his Grace, and the acceptable Time of our Return do expire; and all that is past shall be forgotten and forgiven, to the greatest Sinners, if they will but qualify themselves for his future Favour, by their Faith, Repentance, and better Obedience. Especially since he did, in the

3d Place, take on him the Office of *High Priest*. Having by the other two put Man in the Way of paying acceptable Obedience to his Lord and Sovereign; his second, and next Task, was to bring God again to exhibit Mercy and Favour unto Man, and so, and not before, compleat the whole Business of a Mediator, by reconciling both Parties each to the other. It was in order to this he undertook the Sacerdotal, or Priestly Office, and therein made that Sacrifice of himself upon the

the Cross : For Man, by his Rebellion against God, having put a great Contempt upon his Authority, and offered Indignity and Despight to the Honour and Glory of his divine Majesty, which, by the End of his Creation, and the very Reason of his Being, he was bound to promote ; this made it necessary, for the Support of his Authority, and maintaining his Honour among his other Creatures, that some equivalent Satisfaction should be made him, and some valuable Reparation to his Honour and Justice, before he could again receive those to Mercy and Favour, who had so audaciously offended against him : And there lay the great Task of our Saviour's Mediation, and the great Difficulty of that Work. But, that nothing might be wanting, he himself, who mediated the Reconciliation, undertook also to pay the Satisfaction for us : And therefore he took our Nature upon him, and despised not to receive his mysterious Birth into this World from a Woman ; that, as from a Woman was the Beginning of our Sin and Misery, so from a Woman might be the Beginning of our Restitution to Life and Happiness eternal. But the End of his being born in the Flesh was to undergo in it those Sufferings in our Stead, which became a sufficient Equivalent for whatever we were to have suffered in our own Persons, for all our Iniquities ; and they being accepted of God as such, by Virtue of the same, he fully reconciled God to Man, as well as he had Man to God, and thereby compleatly finished the whole Work of our Salvation. In the

VIIth, and last Place, the End of all this was to obtain for us the Inheritance of eternal Life.

To this indeed we were entitled by the first Covenant, and, had we persevered therein, it

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would

would certainly have been unalterably settled upon us unto all Eternity, in the same Manner as it is now enjoyed by those blessed *Angels, who kept their first Estate*. But we having, by the Breach of it, incurred the same Curse with the *Angels that fell*, we became with them, in like Manner, cast off by our God, disinherited of all the Promises made to us as his Children; and, as Rebels, must have had our Portion with *everlasting Burnings*. And, to ransom us again from this Curse into the same Inheritance that was lost by our Sin, was the whole End and Purport of Christ's undertaking his mediatory Office between God and us: And, as soon as we are again restored to a Capacity of perfect Obedience in the future Life, then shall the Reward of that Life, and not before, take Place; so true is it, that we cannot be made compleatly happy till we are made compleatly innocent. And blessed for ever be his holy Name! yea, his Name shall endure for ever, his Name shall remain among the Posterities, which shall be blessed thro' him, for having so wonderously accomplished it for us by his Death and Sufferings; for thereby he made Atonement for all our Sins, offered a full and satisfactory Compensation to the Almighty for the Punishment due unto us, and hath redeemed us again from Death and Destruction unto the Hopes of eternal Life.

And that it was *necessary for Christ thus to have suffered* for the Attainment of this End, I would briefly evince from those following Reasons; 1. That God's Authority might be vindicated. 2. That his Justice might be satisfied; and, 3. Because God, for these Reasons, or some others best known to himself, required so much from him.

1. It was necessary for Christ to suffer as he did, that the Authority of God might be vindicated;

ated; for that being violated, affronted, and trampled under-foot by Man's Disobedience, it became necessary, for the vindicating and repairing of it, to exact such a Punishment for the Offence as would answer this End. For any Governour to suffer Offences to go unpunished will soon weaken and invalidate his Authority, and bring Contempt upon that and his Laws: So also to inflict Punishments that are less than the Demerit of the Crime, will in Proportion do the same Thing, and at last draw after it the same Consequence of disabling the Government itself, to answer the Ends for which it was appointed. But it being impossible that either of these can be said of the Most High, who with infinite Wisdom, as well as infinite Justice, governs all Things that are; this shews the Necessity of not only punishing those Offences, which are committed against him, but in such a Measure and Degree also as their Guilt deserve; that so his Authority may be maintained, and all those under it may be deterred from transgressing against him: But the Guilt and Magnitude of our Iniquity being such as deserved the greatest of Punishment, God could no otherwise vindicate his violated Authority, than by requiring of our Saviour such a Compensation in his Person for us, as was equivalent thereto.

2dly, It was necessary for Christ to come into the World to suffer what he did, that full Satisfaction might be given to the Justice of God: For the infinite Justice of God being such as can never fail nor err in the least for ever, it doth necessarily require that every evil Deed should receive that Punishment which is the Wages of it; and though his Goodness inclines him to shew Mercy unto all, yet that must not so exert itself as to interfere with, or quite destroy his Justice;

but whenever any Crime committed calls to that for Judgment, the *Judge of all the Earth cannot but do Right* in executing it according to the Guilt and Demerit of the Offence : For the Law that he gave us consists of two Parts, the *Preceptive* and *Vindictive* ; the first obliges unto Obedience, and, upon Failure of that Performance, the vindictive obliges to the Punishment denounced ; and all the Satisfaction that is required, on Man's Part, to be made to God and his Laws, for his Transgressions, is his Repentance, and his Endeavours to cancel his former Disobedience, and a new and better Duty for the future ; God having *laid on Christ, our Ransom, the Iniquities* of all those that truly repent : And therefore our Sin being such as, from the infinite Mercy of God, against whom it was committed, contracted an infinitely deep Guilt, it necessarily required a Punishment proportioned to it.

That Offences receive the Aggravation of their Guilt and Heinousness from the Eminence of the Person they are committed against, is plain enough from this easy Instance : Those very Words and Overt-acts are High Treason, deserving Death, when designed against the King, which, with respect to an Equal, are but Trespas or Ill-manners. Now, if Kings themselves are upon the same Level of Dust and Worms with us, in respect of their Obedience to the Majesty of Heaven and Earth, how infinite is our Distance ? how infinitely eminent and awful is that God whom we sin against ? And therefore, as our Condemnation was most justly to suffer the Punishments of Hell unto all Eternity, which is through an Infinity of Duration to come ; nothing else could prove a sufficient Compensation, so to satisfy the Justice of God, as to deliver us from this terrible Vengeance, but what was infinite also. For this Reason

Reason none of the Saints, not one of the Angels or Archangels of God could be sufficient in our Behalf; because they being all Creatures, and of finite Nature and Worth, nothing that they could do for us could amount to so high a Value.

If God had sacrificed the whole Choir of Angels and Archangels, and devoted to Satisfaction all the Orders of Cherubim and Seraphim, the Value of the Satisfaction had been infinitely short of the Sacrifice of the eternal Son of God; for if *God spared not his own Son*, that was intended, incomparably beyond any other possible Methods, to declare and demonstrate to every Sinner his infinite Severity against, and Detestation of Sin, and Care to abolish it; and, at the same time, his prodigious Love and Mercy, and Assurance of Forgiveness to the Sinner in saving him alive: And it is the great Purpose and Design of the Scripture, and the Counsel of God, for our Salvation, to raise our Hatred and Avoidance of Sin, our Obedience to, and Estimation of the Redeemer, our Love and Gratitude to God for the wondrous Benefit, all to the highest Pitch that is possible, from the Consideration of the Dignity and Degree of the Person, who was the highest that could possibly suffer in our stead. But as God the Son, the second Person of the most holy and all-glorious Trinity, being of the sublimest Worth, and the same Infinity with the Father in all the Excellencies of the Godhead, excepting that of Self-Origination, was alone able to pay a Price of Redemption for us of infinite Value, to compensate for the infinite Guilt of all our Iniquities; when *God saw* (as the Scripture says) *there was no Intercessor, his Arm alone brought Salvation*; Christ therefore having undertaken the Work of our Redemption, out of his inexhaustible Mercy and Pity, when none else

could do it, it became necessary for him to undergo, in our stead, those Sufferings, which, from the infinite Excellency of his Person receiving an infinitely sublime Value, gave full and sufficient Satisfaction to the infinite Justice of an offended God, for the Guilt of our Sins and Transgressions against him.

3dly, It was necessary for the *Word*, or Son of God, *to be made Flesh*, to suffer these Things for the Purchase of Salvation, because God, for the Reasons I have now mentioned, or some others best known to himself, required as much for the Price thereof: Nor can there be any thing more reasonable, than that the offended Party might assign and declare upon what Terms he will be reconciled; for in that Christ paid so much, I take it for a most certain Argument that God exacted it of him; and in that he did require so much, I think it altogether as certain, that it was absolutely necessary for the perfecting that great Work of Salvation, which *the Angels desire to look into*.

If one Drop of Christ's Blood had been sufficient (as some profess in their Strictness of Piety, to magnify its inestimable Value) to what Purpose was the rest shed? and what was the End of his other great and grievous Sufferings, if less could have served? No, God the Father had too much Love for his dearly-beloved Son to put a greater Task of Sufferings on him than was necessary for the Work he undertook; and God the Son too much Wisdom (being infinitely endowed therewith) to do a vain and needless Thing to his own Damage: His praying in his Agony, that the *Cup* might *pass from him*, sufficiently proves his Intentions were not to drink deeper of it than God required should be indispensably necessary. In fine, the whole Work of
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our Salvation was from all Eternity concerted in infinite Wisdom by the whole merciful Trinity: And therefore we may from thence most certainly conclude, that nothing was required by God the Father, or done by God the Son in order thereto, but was most absolutely necessary for the accomplishing of it, and that nothing less could be sufficient for it.

And thus having gone through the Doctrine of my Text, briefly indeed for such a Subject, which is pregnant and conceptive of all the Truths and Duties of the Gospel, and would ask many Discourses to mention, but no Number can exhaust, I shall conclude with some practical Inferences deducible therefrom.

1. Therefore, since so great a Price of Redemption was given for our Souls, learn we from thence what great Value they are of; and, for that good Reason, to reverence and regard them more, and not prostitute them so often as we do to every Lust or Vanity, or trifling Amusement that comes in our Way. That which cost most we never fail to value most in other Things, which are of a perishing Continuance. Pray let us not neglect this Rule, in that which is so near and dear unto us as our own immortal Souls: Since it cost more than all this World could pay for their Redemption, let this teach, that they are too precious to be lost by the Folly of wilful sinning, and that the Attainment of the Glories and delectable Things of the whole World will not make the least Amends for them; but will become only Matter of Loss and Vanity, of Ruin, of Misery, and of fruitless gnashing of Teeth.

2dly, Since God required so much to atone for our Sins, as all those grievous Things which Christ, who was mighty to save, endured in Life and Death for us, God has declared his Abhor-

rence of Sin in the most awakening Manner, and given the clearest Demonstration of his Justice, at the same time that he did of his Love and Compassion to the World, that Sin should not go unpunished; his infinite, irreconcilable Hatred and Displeasure at it seeming to be greater, (as it were) than his Love to the dear Son of his Bosom, seeing he must be born, and given up to die a bitter and shameful Death, before the Guilt could be expiated. The exceeding Greatness of the Provocation, wherewith we provoke the Lord to Anger by our Sins and Iniquities, is plainly legible in the immense Value of that Satisfaction that was required for Atonement: We know very well, in the Things of this World, how great Wisdom it is to avoid doing that which may greatly provoke those on whom we absolutely depend, or who have got Power to avenge for it; we are usually very cautious herein. Could we Christians be but as wise, and as careful in that which relates to our everlasting Welfare, certainly we must make it our chiefest Endeavour to avoid doing any of those Follies and evil Works, which so highly incense the Lord our God, on whom we totally depend for all that we are, or have, and in whose Hands is the dreadful Power to cut us off whensoever he pleases, and cast us into the everlasting Vengeance of Hell for the Punishment of them.

If then the *Terrors* and the *Severity of the Lord* are so great against Sin, and will be rigidly executed in Justice upon all those who do not accept the Terms of his Mercy through Christ, and make themselves capable of the Benefits of it; let us, with all Thankfulness and Haste, accept of them, and make no tarrying to embrace our only Safety and Happiness: For be we assured, that all those who do not truly believe in him that redeemed

redeemed us, and sincerely apply themselves, to the best of their Power, to do all that Righteousness which his Gospel requires from us, can have no Share, either in his Birth from the Virgin's Womb, or in his Death upon the Cross; and thereof being excluded from the Mercy of a Redeemer, are responsible to God for every Iniquity they commit: And how can they stand the least Moment in Judgment before him? For can any of those careless, sinful Men think that God will spare them, who did not spare his own beloved Son? or will remit any thing against such obstinate Offenders, when he so severely exacted the utmost Satisfaction for Sin from him that was most dear unto him, and when he was only in our stead to suffer for it? Let us therefore, whilst we have such Terms of Mercy vouchsafed unto our Acceptance, do all we can, by true Faith and sincere Repentance, to make our Peace with God through Christ, and receive all the Benefits of our Redemption: But if we still go on in Sin and Wickedness (as all obstinate and habitual Offenders do) we shall find him *a consuming Fire*, a most terrible Judge, and severe Avenger. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation? See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on Earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him who speaketh from Heaven.*

3dly, and to conclude: Let us magnify, with the utmost Joy and Alacrity of Spirit, the marvellous Love of our Deliverer, in condescending to dwell in our Tabernacle of Flesh, in the poorest Accommodations of Life; for his bearing to be *despised, rejected, and disesteemed of Men*; to be trod on, as it were *a Worm, and no Man*, a very *Scorn of Men*, and the *Outcast of the People*, and all for our Sakes, What shall we do unto thee,

O thou Saviour of Men, for such strange Kindness, for such wonderful Proof of thy Love? What! but glorify thy Name with all the Faculties of our Praise, with our Souls and Bodies, with our Lips and Lives; and no more do Despight to such ineffable Love and Condescension for our Good, nor any longer disappoint the Ends of thy coming into the World, by continuing in Sin; but live unto thee in all Things, and give up ourselves to thy Service!



S E R

Sunday before *Easter*.

SERMON

The Tenth.

Of partaking in the Sins of others.

MATT. xxvii. 4. Towards the Beginning of this Day's Gospel.

—And they said, *What is that to us? See thou to that.*

DESIGNING, by the Assistance of God, on the approaching solemn Anniversary * to treat particularly upon the Sufferings of our blessed Saviour, which makes up the main Body of that Portion of the Gospel set apart for this Day, and which is the appointed Subject for our pious Meditation this holy Week ensuing; I have chosen these Words, importing a Subject of great Importance, to be weighed and considered by us. They are the Words and Answer of the chief Priests and Elders to the wretched Judas, who, as we read, was very sorry for the Villany his Covetousness had prompted him to: He confesses his Crime publicly, takes the Guilt wholly

* Good-Friday.

wholly on himself, and vindicates the Innocency of the Holy and Righteous *Jesus*, whom he had betrayed and injured, and whom they were unjustly about to punish. Nay, he proceeds farther, and makes Restitution of the Gains which induced him to so infamous a Deed: All which his Sorrow, Confession, and Restitution were proper Steps, and a considerable Progress in a true and acceptable Repentance. They may serve to shame those many pretending Penitents, and give them true Grounds and Cause to despair of the Efficacy of their Repentance, who fall short even of this in *Judas*, while they neglect the undoing the Injury they do to other's Goods or Reputation, by a self-accusing Confession and clearing of their good Name, and by making-up in Restitution, as far at least as they are able, the whole intire Loss that their Brother might have sustained: For so *Judas* restored the whole thirty Pieces of Silver; and in this his Restitution and Confession, indispensably necessary Parts of Duty, in the repenting us of those Injuries we do to others, the miserable *Judas* surpasses many of us now a-days in the Matter of Repentance, even as many as flatter themselves that their Repentance shall be valid and perfect without them.

Judas did well in proceeding thus far; but then the Defect of his Repentance lay in this, that he despaired of Mercy and Acceptance to God: And what was that else but calling in Question the whole Work of Redemption, which his Master Christ was working-out for the Salvation of all Men? It mingled an impious Doubt, whether it was sufficient to take away Sin. It is to be observed farther, if the Cause of this his wicked Despair is inquired into (the intolerable Remorses of which hurried him to dispatch himself, and seek for Ease in the Midst of the greater Pains of Hell)

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that the undoubted Reason of these desperate Thoughts in him, in particular, was the Grace of Christ wholly withdrawing itself, and abandoning him to his own wicked Heart: And the Justice moreover of this Proceeding in the merciful Jesus will readily be owned by all, who consider, that all his Precepts, Miracles, admirable Example, and Means of Grace and of Conversion, had been shamefully abused by this *Judas*, this Companion and familiar Friend: They had waited so long, and yet could make no Impression or Change in his covetous worldly Heart; that it was now Time to withdraw his abused Spirit, as soon as the Ingrate took up a Resolution of betraying him; which, in all Likelihood, was the Period when the good Spirit of Grace departed from him; and then the next Instant, the *Devil enters into him*, and brings him (as we find his sad Catastrophe, in the Verse after the Text) to the Destruction both of Body and Soul: So instructive are the Circumstances of the Person to whom these Words of the Text are addressed.

But my Intention is to consider them at this Time in Relation to the Persons from whence they proceeded. *And they* (the chief Priest and Elders) *said unto Judas*, thus confessing the Innocence of Christ, and restoring the Wages of Unrighteousness, *What is that to us? See thou to that.* Strange above Measure, that they should conceive themselves guiltless! that they should make such Answer, when they consulted, when they covenanted, when they gave Money for the betraying of the envied hated Jesus; when they clearly saw his Innocence, yet put him to Death. And if they partook so largely in the Crime, who can excuse them from being as deep in the Guilt as *Judas* himself, upon whom they would however stupidly throw all the Blame? *What is that to us?*
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See thou to that. Accordingly, St. Stephen roundly tells them the Truth, in the Duty of his Office, that they had been the *Betrayers*, as well as the *Murderers of the Just One.* Acts vii. 52.

And, as it is a dangerous Delusion, we are exceeding apt to put upon our Consciences, the thinking ourselves innocent and guiltless of Sin and Wickedness, if we do not immediately commit it ourselves; or that there is no Harm or Hazard (or at least but little of either) in partaking of, and communicating with the Sins that others are guilty of, by Commission or Omission; and because this Miscarriage mixes, and this Mistake diffuses itself into so many Branches of Action, and so many Particulars of our Conduct; and especially when we are so frequently cautioned hereunto in Holy Scripture, *To have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them; not to be Partakers of those Things which bring down the Wrath of God; not to bid evil Doers and Seducers God speed, lest by so doing we become Partakers of their evil Deeds; to keep ourselves pure, and not to be Partakers of other Mens Sins; with many other holy Caveats and Precautions to the like Purpose in the Word of God: For these Reasons I have pitched upon a Subject of Inquiry greatly importing all Ranks, Conditions and Relations among us, to be advised and reminded of, in order as well to the Re-examination of our Life pass'd in Matters of unsuspected Guilt, as to prevent incurring the like for the Future.*

The shewing therefore the chief Ways how that may be, and we incur the Guilt of others Sins, shall be my Business from the Words: And as this will contain under it Variety of Particulars, I shall respectively bring my Confirmations from Scripture.

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First, in order to gain over your serious Consideration of the ensuing Cases, it may be premised that all Sin is in the Nature of High Treason against the Almighty Majesty of Heaven. In Treason now we know, and allow, that there are no Accessaries, that all are Principals; and as all Sin, in the divine Definition given of it, is *the Transgression of a Law*, I will, as we proceed, specify some of those Laws and Rules, by which it will the more evidently appear, how the Accessaries become guilty. We may then be Accessaries to Sin, and Partakers of the Guilt thereof, these several Ways ensuing.

1. If we are aiding or assisting to the Commission of it by promoting it under-hand. Thus the chief Priests and Elders were *Betrayers of our Lord*, as *Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost*, accuses them to their Face, by bribing *Judas* to commit the Treachery: They were *Socii Criminis*, or Associates in the Villany; inasmuch as they seconded and abetted that devilish Instigation in him, by cherishing the Design and furnishing the Encouragement for putting it into Practice. They advanced the cursed *Premium* of thirty Pieces of Silver down in Hand, without which the sordid *Son of Perdition* had never sought Occasion, nor given the Signal of betraying his innocent Lord and Master. In like Manner, whoever by the Power of Lucre, or other ill Persuasion, instigates a third Person to become an Instrument in his ill Designs of injuring any other in Body, Goods, or Reputation, shares the Sin and divides the Guilt with the immediate Actor or Actors, doth still virtually and in effect betray Christ, because the influencing Motive of the Iniquity derived from him; and whoever lays the first Scene, must be first in the Crime: By Concurrence and Procurance they were in Partnership efficient Causes of those Evils and Enormities,

mities, though visibly perpetrated by another Hand.

Or should we, *secondly*, furnish the direct Means of Sinning, we shall not be innocent. But here it is necessary to observe, and make a Distinction, that some Things minister directly, as it were necessarily, to Sin; others only by Accident. He that immediately contributes to Sin, without all Doubt or Question essentially communicates in its Guilt. To give an Instance; the Makers and Venders of false Weights, or Measures, *ipso facto* partake in the Guilt of those who use and cheat by them; because the very Design and intire Purpose of these Wares is dishonest; nor can they be used with a Conscience of Justice by the Seller, if concealed from the Buyer. It is the same in all Cases, where the Sin cannot well be parted from the employed Means and concerted Instruments; the Maker and Furnisher is not without a Share in the Guilt. Under this Head of Agents purely bad, will fall those who carry Challenges; who inflame Misunderstanding; who interest themselves in the Fartherance of any known Mischief. But there are other Things which do not directly and necessarily tend to Sin, though they may prove the Occasion of it: The Maker of any Instrument of evil Diversion, Cards or Tables, suppose, are not concerned in the Sins and Extravagancies committed thereby, because they are capable to be used without Sin; and whensoever any does accrue therefrom, the Fault is solely acquired by the Users. Neither are the Sellers of Poison answerable, because, sold to proper Persons, it is capable of good Use. Neither are Taverns or Inns unlawful, merely because abused sometimes by Intemperance. The Reason is the same as before, because the Sin may be separated from the Trade, the Wine, or Liquor; for which Instance some use

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to the defacing of Reason, may as well refresh the Weary and the Traveller, accommodate public Meetings, and innocently cheer the moderate Drinker. The Inconvenience would be insupportable to Society, if every Profession and Occupation of Life, which might indirectly minister to Vice, did for that Reason become sinful: At this Rate, every, even the best, must be abolished, because a bad Use, nay the very worst of all, may arise from the best of Things abused. Tho' it ought to be believed and professed, that the greater or the less Tendency any Trade, in itself, has to the promoting of Vice in others, and hindering Virtue in ourselves, it is, for that very Reason, in the same Proportion, the more or the less eligible by us or by our Children.

They again in Authority who command or order what is sinful, if Obedience is paid to their Command, and the Exent follows by Virtue of it, are accusable before God. This Consideration affects Magistrates, Masters and Parents, in Proportion to their respective Right and Authority liable to be submitted to by their respective Subjects, Servants, or Children. What is so much as thought to be encouraged or approved by either of that superior Authority, is apt to be regarded by Inferiors in Dependance as an express Injunction, and carries with it, by a ready Construction, the Force of a Precept. Thus the famous Case of the Murder of *Uriah* is, by the Prophet, charged directly upon King *David*. *Thou hast* (says he to him, by the Direction of God) *killed Uriah, the Hittite, with the Sword, and hast slain him with the Sword of the Children of Ammon:* He did the Fact as much as the Hand that gave the mortal Blow, which, by the Way, did nothing amiss; for that was all the While slaying an Enemy in Battle: The adulterous *David* gave the bloody

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Order, and wrote Letters to *Joab*, one of his prime Ministers and General of his Army, to effect his Death in that specious Manner. Neither do we read any express Blame laid on *Joab*, so instrumental in it, forasmuch as it was in Obedience to his King and Sovereign; yet it will appear presently, that he was not innocent. In like Manner the Murder of *Naboth*, for the Sake of his Vineyard, is imputed to *Ahab* and to *Jezabel*; one concerted it originally; the other, that is *Ahab*, so far was pleased with all the wicked Measures that had been concerted for dispossessing him both of Life and Vineyard, as to rise and take Possession: And the slaying of the 88 Priests is laid at the Door of King *Saul*; because they each of them gave express Commission for the respective Fact, and therefore became guilty of the Blood. By Parity of Reason, they in Authority partake of any other Sin against God which they order, and encourage those under them to commit; nay, if not obeyed, they will nevertheless be guilty of the Intention: And, if they are obeyed, they are principal Agents, and a large Portion of the Guilt will be upon them. For this Cause, a Woe is denounced in *Isaiab*, Chap. x. ver. 1. on those in Power, who *decree unrighteous Decrees, or give unrighteous Commands*. They are to be accounted supremely tainted with Guilt, and obnoxious to the Wrath of God, for abusing so shamefully that very Power and Trust, to the Service of Vice and Promotion of Wickedness, which was given them for the Correction and Surpression of it. It ought however to be noted, that neither are the Inferiors the less immediate Actors of Guilt, who act in Subordination, whether as Subject, Child, or Servant. Extenuations may be offered for the lessening their Crime, as the Greatness of the tempting Reward, or the Fear of the Power commanding; on which
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Accounts, there may be favorable Allowances in human Laws, to exempt those who act under a legal Command from civil Guilt and Punishment. From that Sort of Punishment and Inconvenience indeed they may, but not from Guilt in the Court of Conscience and the Eye of God: Because, in all Cases of known apparent Sin, every Soul must *obey God rather than Man.*

I remember, in the Life of a very wise and most prosperous Princess of our Nation, it was her Method of trying some of her Servants and Ministers, before she would repose herself in their Fidelity, first to put them, by Way of Trial, upon doing something of ill Fame, or plainly sinful: If they readily obey'd her, she dismissed them her Service as unfit for it, having no higher Principle of Obedience, than that of the Fear of her Person; rightly concluding, that a constant Fidelity and Obedience can be built on nothing else but a good Conscience and the Fear of God's Displeasure, which above all Things enforces Obedience in all Lawful Matters: If they, therefore, could disregard and undervalue it so in one Instance, they were like to have small Regard to it in the Course of their Actions.

This Kind of disobeying from Obligations and Ties of Conscience holds good from Children towards their Parents: For we must all and every one chuse to disobey our Prince, our Father and Mother, our Master and Mistress, rather than our God in any evident Case of Immorality.

2dly, They in Authority, as in either of the above mentioned Respects, may also incur the Guilt of Sin by not *forbidding* or restraining it in those who are subject to them; or at least in not endeavouring it as far as in their Power. On this Score *Pontius Pilate*, the Roman Governor, who had the restraining Power in his Hands, must be

deemed guilty of the Blood of our Saviour, by yielding to the importunate Cry of the People to have him crucified, when, at the same Time, he knew in his Conscience, and declared the same before all the People, that he was innocent. The Ceremony of washing his Hands can never wash off the just Imputation of a sinful Weakness, and timorous Cowardice, in not resolutely rescuing and preventing the Death of an innocent Person ; as it was the Duty of a Judge and Governor to have done (a). So Gallio, the Deputy of *Achaia*, whose Office was to keep the Peace and do Justice, was guilty of the Breach of both, in suffering *Softbened* to be beaten even before the Judgment Seat, while *he car'd for none of those inferior Things*. In like Manner, Governors and Magistrates, by looking on, by sinfully conniving at, and not exerting the utmost Authority the Laws have invested them with, for the Restraining Immorality and Vice ; the Immorality and Vice, by that Means, partly become their own, devolve upon their own Heads, for tacitly permitting, and not positively checking and discountenancing them : They are effectual Encouragers and Promoters, and must be answerable to God for the Breach of their Trust ; I was going to say, for other Peoples Vices ;

(a) If we look into History, and observe the Consequence and Punishment of this Desertion of his Trust, we find that those very *Jews* to whose outrageous Cries he gave up Christ (to prevent a Tumult, or ingratiate himself with them, and secure the Favour of the Emperor) within few Years complained of his Government to *Vitellius*, then the President of *Syria*, who put him out, and sent him to *Rome*, to answer for his Misdemeanors ; but before he reached that Place, *Tiberius Caesar* died, and his Successor sent him, by Way of Banishment, to *Vienna*, a City of *France* upon the *Rhône*, where he lived despised and miserable for five or six Years, and then dispatched himself by his own Hands.

Fleetwood's Sermon on Matt. xxvii. 24, 25.

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Vices; in which they will manifestly partake, if such as fall under their Cognizance continue unpunished, or increase, and spread, and gather Boldness, through their Silence, or Neglect of restraining them.

Next, in Respect of Parents, commissioned as they are of God with Authority to chastise and rebuke their Children, and reclaim them by wholesome Correction, when Words will not, to the Fear of the Lord; they also become answerable for their Offsprings Sins and Follies, as many as are imputable to their criminal Indulgence. A Scripture Example of this is well known in *Eli* the High Priest and Judge, who was otherwise a good Man, if he had not been indulgent to a Fault towards his notoriously-wicked Sons: He chid them faintly, he argued with them too gently, putting no Edge, no Weight of Authority to it; he said, *Not so my Sons; for I bear not Good concerning you*: His Crime therefore was in going no farther in their Restraint, which was certainly in his Power; for, in the Right of a Magistrate as well as of a Parent (and he was both) he might have deprived them for a Time of their Office, or punished them some other Way in an exemplary Manner: This would have been a rightful Declaration of his impartial Justice to all *Israel*, that none might expect to come off with Impunity, when he spared not his own Bowels. But this he neglected; and, because his Sons *made themselves vile*, and he *restrained them not*, therefore did the Lord pronounce those severe Judgments upon him and his Posterity, that they should *all die in the Flower of their Age*, and be in Time deprived of the Priesthood: And as to the Accomplishment we find, that he himself came to an untimely End by breaking his Neck, and his two Sons were cut off both in a Day; and other

sad Disasters befall his Family and Posterity. This Example deserves to be taken Notice of, as a Monument set up of God's Displeasure: It ought to be had in Remembrance for the better enforcing the Injunctions in Scripture laid upon the parental Care and Trust in the religious Education of their Children, lest they become obnoxious to the divine Vengeance, and undergo the Punishment of all those Trespasses and Impieties in their Offspring which they might have prevented, either by their seasonable Correction, or by their Counsel, or by their better Example. And lastly, as to the Province and Authority of a Master over Servants, that obliges, in a lesser Degree, to a spiritual Care and Circumspection over them.

There is still, to proceed, another Way of being Partaker of Sin, *i. e.* by a positive Consent, or by an unseasonable guilty Silence, which is a virtual Consent. Thus the Sanhedrim of the Jews, by not gain-saying, became the Murderers of our Lord Christ. *O my Soul come not thou into their Secrets; unto their Assembly, mine Honour, be not thou united!* However they confederate, consort, invite others to cast in their Lot; *though Hand join in Hand, they shall not be unpunished.* We read but of one dissenting Voice in that numerous Council, and that it was *Joseph of Arimathea*, a good and just Councillor: He remonstrated against the Judgment of the Rest of them, the only Way not to be Partaker with them. *St. Luke* accordingly acquaints us, that he had not consented to the Counsel and Deed of them, Chap. xxiii. ver. 50. So, in all other authoritative Assemblies, to be silent, and not to declare one's Opinion to the Contrary in Cases of Wrong or Injustice, is to consent actually to it: For so is the Rule, by not prohibiting, they authorise, and not gain-saying is consenting. *Qui non prohibet quando potest ac debet, jubet.*

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jubet. "In not forbidding, you command the Crime:" Or, in the Words of our Saviour *Mark ix. 40. He that is not with us, is against us.* Whoever conceals the secret Wickedness of another, which ought to be known and brought to Light, for the righting of some third Person falsely accused of it, is accessory to the Injustice. For this Cause the Psalmist arraigns those who *when they saw a Thief, consented to him*: For he is certainly a Well-wisher to the Crime who will not expose it, in a proper Way, to prevent the like for the Time to come. Or should we, at any critical Time, suppress the questioned Innocency of those we are well acquainted with, we share in the Sin of suffering Reproach and Calumny to be cast upon them. As often as we are by, and hear them defam'd and injured, holding our Tongues, and not putting in a Word in Vindication of their injured Virtue, which we were conscious to, do we not, in that Case, join in the Reproach, and give our consenting Verdict that it is true, by our Silence? And how many Opportunities of this Sort have we omitted, in not doing Right to the Character of the Absent?

And as by Silence, at an improper Time, so by speaking we no less frequently partake in the Sin of Calumny, by reporting abroad those malicious Lies which others have raised against a Neighbour's good Name: For it will not wholly excuse and acquit us, to alledge, "we heard so and so," "it is talked, or reported," unless we name the Party we heard it from; because, after all, if the reflecting Story proves a Lie, you are guilty of propagating it to as many as may have heard it by your Means: And they have Need to look to it, if that Passage in *Revelations* concerns them, where the *Lovers* as well as the *Makers of Lies*, shall (as they shared in the Guilt)

so share in their Condemnation, in *the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone*. What so much moves People to report disparaging Things of others they know nothing of, but their Love of Scandal! Certainly never out of Love to the Person of whom the Defamation goes. Would to God they would consider more seriously of this, and not so generally and uncautiously incur the Guilt of trespassing against Charity as they do, while they commonly think there is little Harm in it!

Another general Way of communicating in Sin, is the advising, persuading and enticing to the Commission of it, or to the Omission of Duty: This is a very ancient and successful Method; for *Eve* was thus deceived herself, and, being *first in the Transgression* (as the Scripture says) *she gave to her Husband and he did eat*. He was soon (it seems) prevailed on by the Persuasions of his other Half, though to his certain Undoing. And how many have been the Enticers to Sin, Descendants from their Loins, whose Guilt is great, and their Damnation just! Such are they who debauch the Young, or impose upon the Ignorant, by false Notions of Sin, and the pernicious Maxims of Honor and Gallantry, to the darkening that Light, and perverting that Rule which should guide and regulate their Actions. Many practical Seducers and Advocates for Sin are mentioned in Scripture, who make it their Business to *lay Snares to catch Men*, and draw them into the same *Excess of Riot* with themselves. Such are they who *give their Neighbour too much Drink*, who do it in an enticing Way, on whom there is a Woe proclaimed by *Habakkuk*, and it is augmented by *Isaiab* against those who *draw Iniquity with Cords, and Sin as with a Cart Rope*, i. e. who entice, drag, and,

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as it were, force Men to Guiltiness by their importunate Sollicitations.

Such again are they who advance and publish those destroying Principles (making it their Study and Endeavour so to do) which directly undermine Religion and Morality, Peace and Loyalty; though they are utterly destitute of any Support from Reason or Revelation, from Law or Conscience; though the Judgment of all good and wise Men, and the Determination all the Casuists in the World, except a few Jesuits, are against them. Yet how much has the Evasion of solemn Oaths been spread among the People of this Land, among the unsettled Crowd easy to be imposed on, and made a Prey to such wicked Designs! No Heathen could ever believe it of a Christian, because he abominates it in himself, that he, of all Men, could possibly find in his Heart to take that Opportunity of becoming a sworn Enemy to any one, from the most solemn public Occasion, whom he was bound, when he did swear, to swear himself a Friend to. The very first Author that I can find in History of such perfidious Prevarication is *Arius*, the Founder of the *Arians*, who held a Book under his Coat, and swore to the Contents of that, instead of Things required of him, the most flagrant as well as most scandalous.

Such again are they who advance damnable Heresies, which tend to the Subversion of the Faith of Christians in its conspicuous Fundamentals, against whom the Scripture has denounced Damnation. Thus the enticing Words of those who deprave the Affections of Loyalty of any credulous People by false Colours, and lying or, uncertain Insinuations against their Governor, or pervert their Understanding by wicked Opinions, or their Faith by unsound Doctrines; as many as they thus draw aside, they accumulate to their own
Guilt

Guilt and Punishment in Proportion; they are Coadjutors to *Satan* in compassing the Destruction of Souls, and Co-partners with him in those Sins which other Men commit through their Persuasion and Seducement. Many Instances of this might be brought both from History and Experience. But I will content myself with naming two out of Scripture: One you may read in *Rev. ii. 14.* of the cursed Doctrine and Advice of *Balaam*, who taught *Balak* to cast *Stumbling-Blocks* before the Children of *Israel*; to eat Things sacrificed to Idols, and commit Fornication: And, for this his wicked Counsel, he is charged guilty of the consequent Wickedness. So *Jereboam*, the Son of *Nebat*, who taught *Israel* to sin in that enormous Manner, is mentioned frequently in Scripture, and recorded to all Ages for his eternal Infamy.

The Guilt of advising, or persuading to Sin, must needs be heinous, if on the other Hand, we shall certainly be guilty, even by not advising and dissuading what we can against it. This is now one other Way how we may be Partakers of other Folks Sins: That is as often as any of us have fitting and seasonable Opportunity, and sufficient Authority of telling our Neighbour of his Fault, by a friendly and well-addressed Rebuke. If we neglect it, we suffer Sin upon him, as the Scripture says, and are in as large a Share in his Sin as we had Prospect of reclaiming by our affectionate advising him better, or preventing as much as in our Power.

Under this Head of advising and admonishing, suffer the Pulpit to declare how sensible we are of partaking in Guilt, who are the appointed Re-provers, Rebukers and Exhorters of Men, and that with all Authority, if we should neglect it, if we should cease to give Warning, if we should daub with untempered Mortar, if we should conceal

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conceal the Truth, or keep back any Thing of the whole Counsel of God, if we should palliate his Words and Truths, for the pleasing of Men and Parties, and humoring the popular mistaken Notions and Opinions of some Men. I am sure, if we are not all thoroughly sensible of the Heinousness of the Practice, and the Guilt which is derived to ourselves thereby, we all at least ought to be so.

Another very common Manner of sharing in the Guilt of others Sins and Misdemeanors, is by setting a bad Example, and shewing the Way first ourselves. Thus every Failing in those who are more eminently obliged to be strict Patterns of Duty and Goodness becomes great in them, and increases in Transgression the more it is imitated by those whom we might suppose would be influenced by us, and whose Carriage we are bound to have a Concern for, as well as ourselves. This is the Case of Parents in Respect to their Offsprings, and of Masters to their Servants and Dependants; and so of all others in Proportion to the Influence they have: And, as Example is a much shorter and surer Way of recommending what is evil and unrighteous than Advice, we ought to take special Care of our Actions, and be very sparing in sinful Liberties, lest they increase to a Number and Degree of Guilt we little think of. Thus the wise Man, both in Regard to Example and Persuasion, cautions us not to kindle the Coals of a Sinner, lest we are burned with the Flames of his Fire.

Again, we shall partake in the Sins of others, if we express our good Wishes, or pray for Success. For this Reason, St. John 2 Ep. ver. 10, 11. cautions us not to receive those into our Houses who maintain false Doctrines, neither bid them God Speed, for they who bid them God Speed, are Partakers in their

their evil Deeds; for it is a Shew of Friendship, and a Wishing them Success. Not as if this Caution should deprive those misguided Persons of our Pity or Prayer for them, or so much of our Company as may be instrumental in recovering them from their fatal Error; but it chiefly implies a Prohibition to beware of doing any Thing which imports a Consent to, or Approbation of their evil Proceedings.

This is, lastly, another Method of being accessory to the Sin of others, and Partakers of their Guilt, if we approve and applaud it. For he that approves any ill Thing done, is as bad as he that advises it; and *Tully* says there is no Difference. Thus *Saul*, by standing by, holding the Cloaths of those who stoned *Stephen*, and well approving what was done, is said to be *consenting to his Death*. So the *Jews*, by abetting the Principles, and following the same Steps of their Fathers, and retaining the same Hatred to him and his Apostles, as their Fathers did to the Prophets before them, are included under a fearful Denunciation by our Saviour in *Matt. xxiii. 29, &c.* Notwithstanding they seemed to excuse themselves, and in their Words disapprove of their Fathers Actions: *Ye build, says our Lord, the Tombs of the Prophets, and garnish the Sepulchres of the Righteous, and say, if we had been in the Days of our Fathers, we would not have been Partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets: Wherefore ye be Witnesses that ye are the Children of them which killed the Prophets.* “Go on, do
 “ that which is in your Heart, that the Blood of
 “ all the Prophets, and of me, may fall upon
 “ you.” And the *Jews* suffer to this very Day, and undergo the Entail of their Fathers Punishment, because they still continue to partake in their Fathers Sins; For, to this Day, they will not
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own that they did amiss in killing the *Prince of Life*, and so their Fathers Sins, till they repent and confess them, according to the many Precedents in *Daniel*, *Exra*, and *Nebemiab*, for deploring and acknowledging their Fore-fathers Wickedness as well as their own, will become their own Sins likewise: *He that justifieth the Wicked*, says Solomon, *and he that condemneth the Innocent, are both an Abomination.*

Having thus far recounted several, and those the principal Ways how we may become Partakers in the Guilt of others Sins; as namely, if we approve, applaud, or justify them; if we wish well to them, if we set a bad Example; if we do not dissuade and advise against them; much more if we counsel, persuade, or tempt thereto; if we should conceal in some Cases; if we forbear to vindicate in others; if when in Authority we do not the Utmost of our Duty in restraining Sin in those under us, or whom we have Influence upon, especially should we command and require it as far as our Power goes; if we instigate others, or furnish the direct Means to the Perpetration of it; we had need, in any of these Cases, to consider seriously *what that is to us*; to look well to it ourselves, examine our past Carriage, and prevent the like for the Time to come.

And now, had I Opportunity, I might draw several Inferences from what has been said, useful both for Doctrine and Practice; I might justify to you the Wisdom and Justice of Providence in *punishing the Iniquity of Fathers upon their Children* and Posterity, and suffering them, though more righteous perhaps than their Ancestors, to feel the temporal Effects of his Anger and Judgments, and smart in this World for their Fathers Folly; seeing that is no absolute Evil unto them, but

but may prove the happy Occasion of, bringing them nearer to their Father in Heaven: And it is but just to entail the temporal Punishment of the Sins of wicked Parents upon their as wicked Progeny and Descendants, as long as they love to imitate their Example, and whilst they approve their saying and doing; for, by thus imitating, praising, or abetting their evil Deeds, the Sin becomes also theirs, and they shall suffer the Vengeance of eternal Fire without a rescuing Repentance, and a timely Amendment. *The Soul that sinneth that only shall die, and suffer eternal Punishment; and in this Sense the Righteousness of the Righteous shall be upon him, and the Wickedness of the Wicked shall be upon him.* We should therefore take good Care, lest we partake so far in the Guilt of our Fathers Iniquities as to make them our own.

Seeing therefore, in Conclusion, there are so many Ways of partaking in the Sins of others; seeing we may be punished in this World, and damned in the next for so doing; let us all be cautious and circumspect how we encrease the Load of our own personal Sins, which is but too heavy in the most innocent of us all; let us rather lessen it what we can; let us go to the Table of the Lord, and through a contrite Repentance, lively Faith, and perfect Charity, there let us throw down that galling, uneasy Yoke of Sin and Satan, and take up that *easy one*, that *light Burthen* of Christ; and let us devote the Remainder of our Life to his Service, which is *perfect Freedom*, and a holy Pleasure, Security in this World, and entire Happiness in the next.

THE SERMONS OF

Good Friday.

S E R M O N

The Eleventh.

*On the Redeemer's Sufferings, their
Greatness and Efficacy.*

John xix. 18. Part of the Gospel of the Day.

Where they crucify him.

THE Place where, relates to *Golgotha*, whither they led *Jesus*, to finish their Cruelties on him: It carries a melancholy Sound with it, being by Interpretation a *Place of a Skull*; and it will be recorded famous to all Ages, as a Scene of the greatest Barbarity inflicted upon Innocence, and as being also the Spot of Ground on which once stood the Tree which bore the Sins of the whole World, and in one respect indeed the Tree of Life.

But the Business of our Meditations is to consider the Fact itself, the Crucifixion of our Lord and Saviour; and well does the Cross of Christ at all Times deserve the most attentive, and most devout Strain of our Thoughts, seeing it is the
Sum

Sum of the Christian's Knowledge in the Opinion of St. Paul, who, though he was so well skilled in other Knowledge, yet determined, and comparatively desired to *know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*; for that was the grand Principle of the Christian Religion, and nothing besides that, which went under the Name of Science, was able to be named with, or compared to the Excellency of that Knowledge of Christ; yet rather to be disrespected as Dung, in Competition with the other; *that I may know the Power of his Resurrection, and the Fellowship of his Sufferings*: For the Depth of its Love and Truth is profounder, and of more Worth than any other Love or Truth. Very deservedly therefore is it the Glory and the Boast of Christians, the Subject of their triumphing Confidence, of their most admiring Love, as well as the Ground of all their Hopes; for it was that *Obedience unto Death, even the Death of the Cross*, which gives Assurance of our Life and Pardon, in giving Christ the Opportunity to merit for us, and us the Privilege of his Mediation, through which we pray to God, and in which we trust. And so much is it the Glory; and the Badge of Christians, that the Christian World universally, excepting a very few, are initiated into the Profession of Christ, by the additional, expressive Sign and Emblem of his Cross; and that so early in their Infancy and Baptism, that it may never go out of their Minds, nor be forgot in their Actions.

Though the Doctrine of the Cross is, *to the Jews, a Scandal and Stumbling-Block, and to the Greeks Foolishness*, yet to Christians it ever ought to be *a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners*, by dying on the Cross: And when can it be more properly remembered, or more

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more religiously reflected upon by us than upon this Anniversary of his Sufferings? When we are assembled to consider religiously of it, and mourn and weep, not so much for him, as for our Sins, the principal Authors of his bitter Death and Passion: This will render it an acceptable Observance, if both in publick and private we thus keep it to the Lord. They who will have frequented the publick Service this solemn Passion Week, devoted from Antiquity to these Contemplations, may now reflect, that all his many Mockeries, Indignities, Reproaches, false Accusations, and cruel Scourges, were finished and ended as upon this Day, in the Death of *Jesus Christ* the Son of God. The Beginning, with the succeeding Scenes, were indeed very bitter and grievous, but the End most cursed and shameful: Nay, had they known any Death, either more cruel or more ignominious than that of the Cross, they would have inflicted it on him; no other Favour was to be expected at their Hands, so maliciously were they set against him.

Our Church-Service throughout this Week is very careful, not only to place before us, but to inculcate and impress all the Circumstances of this salutary Passion of our Redeemer to the serious Attention of all her Members, by enumerating, by reiterating, in the Epistles, Gospels, and Lessons, the entire History thereof, both as foretold and accomplished: And they admirably confirm, interpret, and illustrate one another; all the Facts and Incidents are severally repeated in the respective Narrations of the four Evangelists; they are each of them so particular (as if it was their supreme Care and Design, in the Mention thereof) that no minute Particle of such endeared Sufferings might be overlooked, or unobserved by us; but especially, that the frequent Relation

Relation might not fail to affect us with suitable Piety and Affections. To me, therefore, who am prosecuting, and hope to attain this End in some measure, it will be proper at this Time to recal your Thoughts to some of the affecting Passages which began, carried on, and at last fulfilled our Lord's final Sufferings upon the Cross.

This is my first Proposal from these Words: My

IId shall be to enquire into some of the wise Ends and Reasons of our Lord's Sufferings. And in the IIIId, and last Place, to draw some proper Inferences for Christian Practice.

First, I am to recount some of the Passages which began, carried on, and compleated his Sufferings on the Cross: And the first Beginning might well be dated from his Birth, and his lying in a Manger among Beasts. To become the Lord of Beasts, a Man like unto us, was itself a suffering Condescension to one who lived in Glory with the Father *before the World was*. His Birth may be said to be the Commencement of his Sorrows, for then began the Prophecies to be fulfilled; and the Mystery which was kept secret since the World began, to preach and unfold itself to the World. Suitably to its Beginning was his whole Life exercised with Want and Poverty, in the meanest Circumstances, and poorest Conveniencies of living in the Form of a Servant, and of one that was of no Reputation, as to the Esteem of this World. It was our Sins that made him to serve; it was the Necessity of our Misery, and his relieving Charity, that reduced him to an Estate as poor as a Beggar: And what can be a more contenting Observation to the many Poor and Destitute of this World, who are thinking on their

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their Saviour this Day? What a mighty argumentative Honour and Pattern should this be for their Comfort and Consolation, that the Lord of Glory selected and sanctified their State of Life before any other, and chose it as the fittest to carry on the divine Life? Can you give a good, or Christian-like Reason for lamenting your low State, and Want of a few unsatisfactory, needless Gratifications for a Moment of Life, when your Hopes lie so fair for a happy World to come, provided you will understand your true Riches? The Poor, in their Poverty, may more adequately challenge Relation to their Saviour; and to his Promises, moreover, of unfailing Sustenance, if they seek first his Kingdom, and the Righteousness thereof. Why should any repine then at their Condition, if the commonest militant Soldiers generally fare better in this Life than the very Captain of their Salvation? More destitute was he than the Foxes, and Birds of the Air; he had less of House or Property than any of you. Is not Health and Strength for Labour that sure Estate to you, which, well managed, is a Supply of all Necessaries? And when you are really past your Labour, by Age or Sickness, is there not divine Providence, is there not human Provision to take Care of you? You indeed would be poor, and have nothing, if you had not the Gospel; but if to the Poor the Gospel is preached, that should be your sustaining Joy, your exulting Treasure and Rejoicing, and most at Heart, that you may so freely partake and communicate in all the Blessings and Privileges thereof, *without Money and without Price.* And have you any thing to envy of all the Greatness and Distinctions of Neighbours about you, if your Condition exempts you more than theirs from the Temptations of the World, and Obstructions in the Ways of Virtue?

tue? I was going to say, you have either chosen, or God has chosen, *the better Part* for you: If you have any serious Thought, or real Creed for another World, you may be glad, you may be amply, at least, satisfied with your Lot here. It is your Wisdom to be persuaded of the Truth of the Case, that your Condition is equal to the Richest, as to all Events of the Life hereafter. Nay, let me assert your Cause farther, that it is, for the most Part, and by so many Instances, preferable to theirs, as the Rich are *to care for you*, and remember to act the Part of good Stewards of God towards you. And how many of you may be saved in your Calling, when so many of them forget the Trust, and disuse the Science of being Trustees, for which they must one Day give strict Account? If Christ has so particularly lifted up your Heads, and waited upon you, by adopting himself into your Condition, why is any one of you cast down? Certainly you ought more and more to be satisfied with your Condition, since your Maker and Redeemer has so plainly equalled, nay, preferred you to the Rich.

But let us draw nearer to those Scenes of our Lord's Life, wherein he was notoriously a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief for all our Sakes, and there will be no longer Power in us to deny the Grievousness thereof. The Violence, the Rudeness, the Contumely, the Stripes and Blows, the Forsaking and Treachery wherewith he was treated, as it much inhanes the Guilt of those who were the Instruments, so does it most practically declare the invisible Love of him who endured it. *Was ever any Sorrow like unto his Sorrow?* The Answer to that is, *Was ever any Love like unto his Love?* How should it, therefore, be *ever marvellous in our Eyes*, lye deep in our Memory,

memory, be the engrafted Theme of our frequent Thanksgiving, and a powerful and speedy Excitement to our Repentance and to all Goodness?

If we begin our Reflections on Treachery, Judas, who led on those who began the deadly Violence upon him, is never to be forgot.

To sell his Lord, his Master, his Friend, and with him, his own Soul and Conscience into the Bargain, and for so poor a Sum, was the very Infamy of all Covetousness. To be betrayed by one, who was his Companion, his own Familiar Friend, and did eat of his Bread, must certainly be highly aggravating; as nothing pierces the Heart so deeply as the Falshood of a Friend, of one that has Obligations to us. To betray him too with the Sign and the Circumstances of a Kiss, the Token of Familiarity and Dearness, adds Hypocrisy to the Villany: His Words were *smoother than Butter*, but the *Poison of Asps was under his Lips*; but so the Scripture was fulfilled, that *Christ received Wounds in the House of his Friends*.

When the Traitor brought again the thirty Pieces of Silver, we know the Answer of the chief Priests and Elders: *What is that to us? See thou to that*. It was nothing to them, they thought, whether his Master was innocent or not; guilty or not guilty, they were resolved to have his Blood. The same worldly Interest which induced him to betray, determined them to cut him off. The Death of this Traitor was like unto his Action, infamous. And O! how much is it to be wished and deprecated, that the Principle of worldly Covetousness which ruined him, was far from every one of Christ's Disciples ever since! Yet be it certainly known and pondered by us all, that the same, self same corrupting worldly Principle, rules in us, which acted him, as often as we prefer our own Gain and Lucre, (to the inevi-

table Ruin of others, to any Virtue, to a good Conscience. We so often betray Christ, and sell our Souls. And, as no Wickedness in the World does so much harden the Heart whilst we live, as an avaricious Greediness of Money; so nothing drives to Desperation sooner, when the Soul awakens, and begins to find itself departing into another World. Legacies to the Poor, at that Time, will not atone for past Hard-heartedness and Oppression, and saving in those Things which we ought not: *Mammon* deserts them then; and they have nothing to trust to. Let it not be forgot, that the most notorious Example of Despair in the World, and the only one in all sacred Record, was occasioned by Covetousness in this Instance of *Judas*.

After this, in Order, we are next to view our dear Lord seized as a Thief, or Transgressor of the Law, by a Multitude of thoughtless Mercenaries, needlessly armed with Swords and Staves, who too, but a little while before, had Hosanna'd him in Triumph into *Jerusalem*; so constant is the Multitude in their Opinions of Persons, and Things! Then all the Disciples forsook him and fled; not one Friend to stand by him in his Distress! no not one durst open his Mouth to speak a good Word, even for him who always went about doing Good: Yes, with those very Feet which he had washed a few Days before, did his Disciples flee away and abscond from his Calamity. One, indeed, more zealous than the rest, in the hot Fit of his Zeal, drew a Sword, and cut off an Ear of one of the Assailants at that Time, mistaking the Weapons of his Master's Warfare to be carnal; but, soon after this Fever, he fell into the cold Fit; abjur'd him roundly, not with cursing alone, or forswearing singly, but with cursing and swearing: Sad Proof of mortal Weakness, of human Beast, when left to its own Strength!

They

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They violently hale him away, from one High Priest to another, and from one Tribunal to another, between *Herod* and *Pilate*; mean time the Vulgar (which generally used to be on the Side of suffering Persons) with particular Inhumanity, and unprovoked by any Carriage or Language of the divine Prisoner, spit their Contempt in his Face; of which it is said in Scripture, *thou art fairer than Children of Men*. They buffet an *Innocent Lamb that opened not his Mouth*: They lay on their Blow, and then make a Jest of it; *Tell us, thou Prophet, thou Predicter, Jesus, who was it that smote thee?* It was Joy and Triumph to them to make merry with his Misery. They scourge him next without Mercy, that it might be fulfilled how they *ploughed up his Back* (as the Prophet foresaw) *with long Furrows*; and, as if this was not enough, they meditate an Addition yet keener than all: For, in Derision, they put on him the Royal Habiliments of a King; first the Purple Robe: Then they provided a Crown for his Coronation, but it was a cruel one of Thorns, which they, to do him the more Honour, painfully force to fit his divine Temples; mash it about his Ears with a Design, that they might leave no whole Part in him, from the Crown of his Head to the Sole of his Foot. To these were added a scoffing Scepter of Reed put into his right Hand; and they as soon take it out, and with that very Scepter smite the ridiculed Majesty, making merry in bowing the Knee to him, and saying, *Hail, King of the Jews! Hail, King Jesus!* Thus the *Jews* studied to deride him the more with their great Respect, to give the greater Weight to their theatrical Insults against him. Yet these very Contrivers and Promoters of this Spectacle, with a full Purpose of frustrating, were all the while exactly and minutely (fulfilling wonderful Di-

rection of over-ruling Providence!) the Predictions of their own Prophets relating to the *Messiah*, whom they confessedly were in Expectation of about that Time. Little did they imagine they were fulfilling what was written: *All they that saw him laugh'd him to Scorn; and he was the Scorn of Men, and the Out-cast of the People.* Was there any here to be satisfied, how many References might I easily produce from the Types foresignifying, and Prophecies foretelling, in order to prove our Saviour's Words to his Disciples after his Resurrection; *That thus it was written, and thus it behoved the Son of Man to suffer, before he entered into his Glory.* And both the universal Opinion and Use of Sacrifices spread over the Heathen World (this implying that, *without shedding of Blood, there was no Remission of Sin*, nor Reconcilement with God to be hop'd for) might be traced and shewn to have all their Rise and Signification from the corrupted Tradition of the ancient Expectation of this Sacrifice of Christ, and therefore they should also cease all the World over, since the Thing signified has been actually sacrificed.

As to the *Jewish Prophecies*, it shall suffice to observe in Brief, that he was betrayed by a familiar Friend; sold for so many Pieces of Silver; buffeted and spit on; his Garments parted: He was lifted up upon the Cross, as the Serpent in the Wilderness was lifted up; his Feet and Hands pierced; he was *numbered with Transgressors*; just as foretold in their Scriptures; neither did those Predictions lay any Necessity on them of so doing. They that *passed by reviled him*, in the Words of the Psalmist; and Jesus, in his Agony, cried out in others of his prophetic Words: *They pierced his Sides, and not a Bone of him was broken*, with other Particulars, that it might be fulfilled which

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was spoken: And every minute Circumstance foretold had its Completion. *All Things*, says our Lord, *that are written of me, have an End. What God spake by the Mouth of his holy Prophets, be hath so fulfilled.* Very great Stress was laid by our Lord himself, in exactly fulfilling every Prophecy; insomuch that we find in the 28th Verse following the Text, our Lord could not give up the Ghost, till he had tasted of the prophesied Gall and Vinegar, that was to be given him when thirsty. There remained but one single Prophecy more to be fulfilled, to detain him any longer now in Life: That the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus saith, *I thirst.* Now there was set a Vessel full of Vinegar; and they filled a ~~Sponge~~ *Sponge* therewith, put it upon Hyssop, and put it to his Mouth: Which when he had tasted, then all was entirely accomplished. Then our Lord Christ, who came to fulfil every Tittle of the Law and the Prophets concerning his Sufferings and Sacrificing, said, and they were his last expiring Words, *It is finished:* And when he had so said, he bowed his Head and gave up the Ghost. Then had all Things spoken of his Sufferings their compleat End, then the HandWriting of Ordinances, and Ritual of the Law, were all abolished, were all nailed to the abrogating Cross, that Minute they nailed his Hands. When Christ, the End of the ceremonial Law, was put in the Grave, they were all buried and done away. The Vail of the Temple was rent, in Token to the Jews of a Dissolution of their Type and Liturgy, and that the Times of Reformation were come, when the Father was no longer to be worshiped in a peculiar Manner at Jerusalem, but in Spirit and Truth by all Men, now equalled in Favour. And it is remarkable, how the Providence of God so over-ruled and disposed Things at his last Exit, that, in Opposition

sation to all the Spite of the *Jews*, he should be adorned, dignified, and recorded with his true Title and Character, under which he had been foretold by the Prophets, in Capital Letters upon the Cross, in *Hebrew*, *Greek*, and *Latin*. And *Pilate*, in this Matter, neither regarded the High Priests, nor the Madness of the People, nor the Jealousy of *Tiberius* the Emperor, all which before had basely influenced him to give Commandment that he should be crucified.

But, to proceed, they accuse and condemn him in two Courts: First before the *Sanhedrim*, there they impeach him of two Crimes, of a Design to destroy the Temple, and of Blasphemy, because he would not deny the Truth, that he was the Son of God: They suborned Witnesses against him; yet neither so did their Witnesses agree together; notwithstanding they sentence him as guilty of Death. Soon after, and to ratify their lately-lost Power of Life and Death, which by Prophecy they were to lose just before the Advent of the *Messiah*, a Governor being not to depart out of *Judah* till *Shilo* came; they conduct him to the *Roman Pratorium*, to receive a second Sentence from *Pilate*; where Witnesses as falsely and maliciously accuse him of having a Design against the Civil Government. *Pilate*, notwithstanding the avowed Innocence of *Jesus*, and the known Envy and Malice of the *Jews*, releases at their Request a notorious Fellow who had broke the Peace, made an Insurrection, and was guilty of Murder; and orders the meek, harmless *Jesus* to be crucified, i. e. to undergo a Death which carried in it the utmost Ignominy that human Wit had then invented. The *Romans*, who inflicted several Sorts of Death, and were variously skillful in punishing Malefactors, reserved this of the Cross for the very worst of Men, and Out-cast of the People, and it

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was thought almost too severe for them too, unless they were at the same Time Slaves by Condition: Insomuch that none suffered it but Slaves, and the very Dregs, the Refuse of Transgressors. They who had the common Privilege of Freedom, had the greatest Abhorrence imaginable of this Way of dying. Yet for an Augmentation to his Disgrace, he was placed between two Thieves; as if he was the greatest, as if he was the only King of them! One of the Ecclesiastical Historians acquaints us, that *Constantine* the Emperor was the first who took away this Punishment on the Cross, out of Reverence to our Saviour; not being willing that the vilest Malefactors should suffer upon that which had been the Instrument whereon the Son of God purchased the Salvation of Mankind.

The Pain of this Death, if it enters into our Imagination, must certainly be excessive; to have the Hands and Feet transpierced with Nails, and Iron entering into the Soul from all Quarters. Could we view the sacred Body, conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin *Mary*, close nailed and fastened to Torment, only to support it the longer under it! Could we see the suspended Weight of the Whole, in that Manner forcing the Joints from their Places, and wrenching the Bones asunder! Behold how it heaves and writhes, the Heart beating and dissolving in the Midst of the Body like melting Wax, and the Eyes ready to start out with Anguish! See it destitute of all Ease but strong Cries and Groans, the piteous Vent, the lamentable Streams of overflowing Misery! See him lastly expiring! and all Nature in a Passion with him! The Sun mourning in an Eclipse, not enduring to behold such a Spectacle! "The Earth trembling, the Temple rending, the Rocks bursting, the Dead arising"; which made a Heathen, beholding the Eclipse, affirm, that Nature,

ture, or else, that the God of Nature was dying. If this does not raise some feeling Concern in us likewise, we shall be more insensible than the very Rocks, or they that were in their Graves. The Sight must have overwhelmed us with commiserating Anguish, filled us with Resentment, and converted us to Faith in him. As the Manner of his dying actually did convert some of the *Jews*, who struck their Breasts at it; the History in like Manner should affect us in Meditation, being as certain, in all the Circumstances, to us, as if we had seen them all with our Eyes.

So extremely cruel and painful was this Kind of Death, so long were they sometimes in dying, that in Compassion to the Living, the Executioner commonly strangled them first; or the Charity of some By-stander offered the Sufferers a Dose of Wine mingled with Myrrh, to help to stupify, and render them less sensible of their Pains: And this was the only single Instance, that we can meet with in all the holy Evangelists of our Lord's Sufferings, that intended any Mercy or Compassion to him, by offering him this intoxicating Mixture, before he was fastened to the Cross; which yet he refused, knowing he had Resolution enough to undergo the worst of their Malice. The Torment of this Death must needs grate in *English* Ears, who have not been able, for a long Time, to endure the Hanging of a Malefactor alive in Chains; so intolerably painful to us are the miserable Outcries of such Sufferings.

After this, it will not at all be lessening to reflect upon those inward Horrors of his Soul, because in the Accounts of the Evangelists, they seem far to exceed all the bitter Things done to his Body: I mean those Agonies and Consternations of Sorrow, which overwhelmed his holy Mind in the

the Garden ; where the Divinity seemed wholly quiescent, and to forsake the human Nature for a while, that it might struggle with and sustain alone all that intense Load of the infinitely many, of the heinously great Sins and Iniquities, of the repenting Sons of Men ; that it might feel all *the Terrors of the Lord* set in Array against him upon their Accounts, yea all *the fierce Arrows* of the Almighty Father's Wrath shot into his Soul, the Poison whereof *drank up* his mourning Spirit, while the *Pains of Hell* surround him, *the Chastisement of our Peace* was upon him, and the Lord *lay'd on him the Iniquity of us all*. For our Sakes, the Father abandoned the dearly beloved Son of his Bosom, who had never offended him, to a Pitch of Desertion nearly approaching to Despair : *My God ! My God ! Why hast thou forsaken me ?*

How excessively agonizing were these Conflicts of Mind, may partly be collected from the Vehemence and Energy of the Evangelists Expressions, who seem to strive with one another, which of them should set-out the Greatness of our Lord's Sorrows most emphatically. In St. Matthew, *He began to be sorrowful and very heavy, and his Soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto Death* : In St. Mark : *Sore amazed, &c. troubled* : His Soul was shaken with vehement Commotion ; and his Soul we may suppose to be so much the more afflicted to foresee (as it did) how great a Part of the World would reject his Gospel, how many apostatise and degenerate from it ; and of those who made external Profession of it, how many more would receive it to their greater Condemnation ; what little Fruit of the bitter Sufferings and Blood of God there would be among the Sons of Men, for whom he laid down his Life ; That they would not, after all, but very few, embrace

brace and save themselves by all that he did and suffered for them. This, this Thought must pierce him deepest of all: Yea, he was in an Agony, so horrid and unusual, as, what Words could not, great Drops of Blood start through the Pores of his Body, and confess the intolerable Anguish within, so exquisite that he prayed three Times most earnestly on his Face, to be eased from drinking that Cup, in which was abridged all that was bitter and shocking to human Nature. *Father, if it be possible, if thou be willing, let this Cup pass from me! Nevertheless not my Will, but thine be done.* Then he fulfilled the Scripture in *pouring out strong Cries and Groans*. And in this his earnest and repeated Prayer, (though it was not possible, that is, not convenient in the Order of divine Justice and Mercy, that it should pass from him, and the World be saved without his drinking it) yet this Sensibleness of his Sufferings plainly demonstrated the Reality, both of the Sense and Spirit of our human Nature; and his being so very sensible of the Sufferings, does so much the more enhance the Merit of his Enduring; and his resigning so entirely to the Wisdom of his Father, how does that designedly teach us likewise to conquer whatever Unwillingness our Flesh naturally has against Sufferings, when it is the Pleasure of God to lay them on us. So insupportable were they to the human Soul of our patient Saviour, that an Angel was delegated from Heaven to support him from sinking under the Weight.

Behold and see, if ever any Sorrow was like my Sorrow, Lam. i. 12. Words never so many, and exaggerating, cannot express, nor Thoughts never so comprehensive reach to conceive it.

And, if we pause a little, who was thus treated, thus condemned and crucified: Innocent it is plain he was; the Witnesses proved nothing to the Contrary;

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rary; the Judge absolved him as such, *found no Fault at all in him*; the Traitor who betrayed, and the Thief who died with him, confessed him innocent; his Looks, his Carriage bespoke it: And it was necessary he should be perfectly such, because he was to expiate the Sins of the Guilty. You, that are wont to pity a Criminal leading out to Execution for his deserved Crimes, cannot but have your Bowels of Pity inflamed at the Treatment of this holy Innocent. Was it not the Son of God whom they presumed to heap this Variety of Sufferings and Affronts upon? He could have procured more than twelve Legions of Angels to his own Rescue, struck them, his Judges and Accusers, all dead with a single Word, as with a small Ray of his Divinity he did some of the forwardest Assailants to the Ground. *I have Power, said he, to lay down my Life, and to take it again; no Man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.* Whom did they so rashly condemn? No less than the future Judge of themselves and the universal World, Quick and Dead: The Judge really underwent the Death for the Criminals. He who had several Times forced Death to deliver back its Prey, submitted to it himself for the Good of others. And whose Face did they so scornfully spit in? Even that which all the Rich and the Mighty will wish to favour and countenance them, and from the Frowns whereof they, and all the other Wicked, will call for Mountains to screen them at the great Day. Whom did they ludicrously habit, crown, kneel to, and salute King? That very Name which is above every Name, to whom Thrones, Princedoms, Powers, and Dominions in Heavenly Places are subject: To whom all the Knees of Angels above, and of what abides in the Earth, and under the Earth, shall bow: *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*

And

And was he such, and greater than is ever to be described by Words, or conceived by Thoughts? Who then can declare the Greatness of his Sufferings? or what expiate the Guilt of the Actors, but that Blood they shed, the Blood of a Person as infinite in Mercy as in Dignity?

Thus have we gone through the several Stages, contemplating the great Sufferings of our Lord as crucified on this Day; and, as St. Paul says to the *Galatians*, Ch. iii. ver. 1. *Jesus Christ before your Eyes has been evidently set forth, and crucified among you.*

The Mention of the infinite Dignity of his divine Person must excuse me at this Time from saying much in my second Proposal, which undertook to account for the Wisdom and the Reason of our Lord's Sufferings, and the perfect Satisfaction he thereby made to the Justice of God for our Sinners, by sustaining Punishment in our Stead: *Bearing our Sins in his own Body on the Tree.* The Objections of the *Socinians* to the contrary might be answered, was there any Need of it in this Place. It is sufficient to reflect, for the Establishment of our Faith, that, though our Lord did not so undergo the self-same Punishment of the Torment of the Damned in Hell due to Man's Transgression, yet if we measure in our Mind the super-excellent, I should say infinite Dignity of his Person, the Son of God, suffering what he did for a Time upon Earth, who can doubt but that it was an Equivalent to the Suffering eternal Punishment, for an infinite Duration which was due to us? And what Method in the World, besides the Sufferings of the Son of God, could be so well fitted to convince the Men of the World how dear their Souls are to God? how great his Mercy to Sinners? Yet not less, at the same Time, his Justice and Displeasure to their Sins; and what insupportable Anguish

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Anguishes and Torments must we expect for our Iniquities, if they are not washed away in his precious Blood? So very much does the Holy Scripture speak of Christ's suffering in our stead, and *becoming Sin for us* in a substituted Punishment, that, as one well observes upon this Controversy, "The Scriptures themselves must first be crucified, as well as Christ, before any other tolerable Sense can be made of them."

But I hasten to my *Third* and last Proposal, To remind you of some practical Influence the Thesis of our Lord's Sufferings ought to have upon us.

And sure they will have no Effect at all, if they lead us not,

1st, To dread and tremble at the severe Justice of God, that required, and could not be pacified with any less Compensation for the Violence done to his Holiness, and the Contempt offered to his Laws and Authority, than the calamitous Sufferings, the deplorable and cruel, the cursed and ignominious Death of his Son, his *only-begotten, well-beloved Son*. If no lower Ransom could serve, not any less Sacrifice atone for our Sins, than the Blood of God, surely we ought to detest and utterly abominate that which cost so much; for every wilful, deliberate Sin of his Christian People, revive his Passion anew, and, as far as it is in our Power, *crucifies the Son of God afresh, and puts him to an open Shame*; but at the same Time puts us too into a most desperate State: For, if we will still sin on resolvedly, in Despight of this Remedy, *there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin. His Blood will be upon our Heads*, if our Hearts are not (as the Scripture invites them to be) *sprinkled thereby from an evil Conscience*. The Jews were but Instruments, our Sins the principal efficient Cause and Procurers of his tragical Endurings:

durings: *For he was wounded for our Transgression, and smitten for our Sins.* It was our Sins and Ingratitudes which bruised and mangled his sacred Body. We mock him again, and deride him ten Times worse, knowing who he is, as oft as we make a Mock at Sin. Our Crimes were the pointed Lance that pierced his Side, and the driving Nails that fixed him to the cursed Tree. Ought we not, as well in Pity as in Honour, from this Instant, not to endure them any longer, have no Liking of them any more, but hate and abhor them with *perfect Hatred*? Let us resolve to destroy them utterly, from this very Day forward; and *while it is called to-Day* (and what Day can we begin better than on this of our dear Redeemer's Crucifixion) to *crucify the old Man with all his Lusts, and enslaving Affections.* Let us in this be conformable, and planted in the *Likeness of his Death*, and, in the *Likeness of his Resurrection, rise again to Newness of Life*, that we may live to him in this World, and enjoy him to all Eternity. Oh! why do I still see so much Passion and Contention for this World? Shall we never crucify the Love of it?

But, and if the old Man should revive a little (as he certainly will, if we are not very watchful) and surprise us into some Acts of Sin again; nay, though others of us heretofore have been guilty of wilful Sins, never so many or great, yet ought we not, in the

2d Place, to despair of Mercy and Pardon, if we recollect the supereminent incomprehensible Dignity of him who suffered for us; whose Life was of that perfect, unfinning Obedience to the divine Will, and whose Pains and Sufferings were so immensely valuable for our worthless Sakes: For not for his own, but for the Offences and Provocations of others, even for us among the Rest,

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Rest, was he pleased to become a Ransom, an Offering, a Sacrifice, a Propitiation, a Mediator, an Advocate and Intercessor, to make Atonement for us, and what he did, and suffered, did more illustriously repair the Honour and Authority of the supreme Lawgiver, his Father, than they were at first dishonoured and insulted by the Sins of our first Progenitor, or any of his Posterity. And, by this wonderful Contrivance of our Redemption, to the second *Adam's* suffering, the Implacability of the divine Justice and Severity against Sin, unappeasable upon any other Terms but his Suffering, and our dying to Sin by Repentance, was no less proclaimed to all the World: At least, by the Sacrifice of himself once offered, he made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World. Therefore, though our Sins are as Scarlet, yet is the Blood of the Lamb of Efficacy more than sufficient to wash them as white as Wooll. The Fountain of the invaluable Blood is opened to wash away all the Uncleanneſs, and Defilements of Sin. O! let us all wash and be clean, that it may purge every one of our Conſciences from dead Works, to serve the living God! which it will effectually, which it longs and thirsts over us to effect, if we will but perform the Condition of Obedience; if we will but believe in his Blood, so as to repent us of our old Conversation, and forsake our Wickedness, and lead new Lives. When we have begun to do this, we may turn our Mourning into Joy; since we shall be such great Gainers by it; even of every Thing that is really valuable and good in this fading Life, and of immense Treasures of Felicity in the unchangeable Life to come. For who can doubt the Promises of God, or so much as suspect them? Since he has given his Son, how shall he not also, with

P 2 *him,*

him, freely give us all Things? But it is not to be forgot, that none but the Penitent and Obedient among us shall have any Title to them for ever; as for others, their Portion is to be in the other State, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.

But 3dly, The Consideration of these Sufferings, and our Lord's meek resigned Carriage under them, designedly teach us Patience under those that may at any Time befall us. *For hereunto were ye called,* says the Scripture, *because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Ensamble that we should follow his Steps,* 1 Pet. ii. 21. If we would then follow his Steps, let us first in the Words of the Apostle to the Heb. Ch. xii. ver. 3. *consider him who endured such Contradiction of Sinners, lest we also be weary and faint in our Minds:* Let us, like him, when reviled, revile not again, but commit ourselves to him who judges righteously. Let us all follow the great Original and Pattern of Meekness and Holiness, Charity and Resignation, and meekly and entirely, like him, resign ourselves to God in his wise Disposal of our Affairs. We must with him heartily forgive the Enemies and Instruments who inflict grievous Things on us, and pray with him to God for their Forgiveness. We may, as he did, pour out our Soul before him, and shew him our Troubles, and earnestly, yea ardently entreat the Removal of them, *if it be possible, i. e. if it be convenient for my Good for thee so to do; nevertheless, not my Will, but thine be done.* And no Doubt, if God sees it not best for us to remove the Burden, we shall receive, if we have prayed as we ought, Assistance (tho' not by an extraordinary Angel from Heaven) yet assuredly from the ordinary Grace of God, to enable us to bear it. Doubt we not therefore the Goodness of our God; for he intends us nothing but our Good, be the Affliction ever so grievous. For
hearken

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hearken what the Lord God says concerning us: *If ye suffer with Christ, ye shall also reign with him; if ye follow the Example of his Patience, ye shall indubitably be Partakers of his Resurrection.* Our Lord Christ, by the bitter Things he underwent, has sweetened all the Sufferings and Troubles that can possibly befall us.

Besides, there is a vast Difference between his Case and ours, enough to stop our Mouths, and silence our Impatience; for, as the Thief said on the Cross, *We indeed justly suffer; but this Man has done nothing amiss.* Our daily Sins and Follies deserve vastly more Punishment than is ever inflicted in this World; therefore ought we to be dumb and not open our Mouth, when these Doings of the Lord are upon us. Let not sinful Man pretend to be above Sufferings, when the Son of God, *who did no Sin*, submitted to them? Did he part with more than all the World for our Sakes, and shall we suffer the Loss of nothing for our own Misdemeanors? Let the Innocence of Man no more be ashamed or disquieted with false Reproaches, since the Innocence of Christ could not escape them? In this we must also *take up our Cross and follow him*; for those that will be godly may expect to *pass through this and many such Tribulations* before they enter into the Joys, whither Christ our Captain is gone, being the first perfected through the like Suffering. O! let us, under this Banner and Ensign of the Cross, learn, and labour, and fight daily to conquer both the Fear of Suffering and the irregular Love of Pleasure.

We are still to admire the marvellous great Love of Christ in these his sore Sufferings for us, which is the

4th and last Consideration I shall mention. And here I can do no more than abridge my Thoughts; for the Subject is too great for Words,

and too long for the Time. What says the Word of God? *In his Love and in his Pity he redeemed us.* And, *hereby perceive we the Love of God,* because he laid down his Life for us. *Ignatius* emphatically says "my Love was crucified for me." He came to bind up our Wounds, to heal our Bruises, and love us freely. That he should quietly endure cruel Pangs, to rescue us from eternal Gnawings of the Worm of Conscience! a Crown of Thorns to gain us that incorruptible one of Glory! Stripes and Wounds that we might be whole! the Death of a Malefactor that we might pass for innocent! become a Curse for us that we might gain the Blessing! Not *despising the Shame* of the Cross to save us from Death, and procure us a more glorious Immortality! Blessed Lord! what was Man for whom thou didst these Things? *Greater Love than this hath no Man, that he lay down his Life for a Friend; but we were Enemies,* Rebels to him and his Father; the marvellous Love of Jesus nevertheless offered up his Blood for us. And who can think on it without Amazement at his Goodness, without adoring, without praising, and thanking him for his Kindness? Who can live moreover without desiring some Opportunity, and wishing for some particular Commands, that we may make some Return of Gratitude and Service to such a Benefactor? If he has given us any special Precept, such Love of Christ, one would think, should be able to constrain us into an Obedience: If there is any Obligation in the willing Minds of rational Creatures, it is in the most obliging Love; if there is any Gratitude in a Christian, it is to be returned thither.

Go then, O Christian, and ask your obliging, loving Lord, what he has commanded you? Would you know that, and what was his testamentary,
what

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what his last parting Commands. *Do this in Remembrance of him*; which would enable us, rightly doing it, to fulfil all his other Injunctions, and perform his whole Will. Is not this also, an easy Command? Is it not an Emblem and Representation of that same bleeding, suffering Love of Jesus? What Sort of Christianity then is theirs, where is their Belief; what Value, what Account do they shew forth of the exceeding great Love of our Master and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, who can so often, so contemptuously, turn their Back on Christ, on this Memorial, this salutary Pledge of his Love? Thou commandest, O my Saviour, to commemorate these thy Sorrows and Death, to *do this in Remembrance* of them; that thou wast immersed in Misery for my sinful Sake; and shall I not do it in a contrite Remembrance, that it was I, in my Sins, that wounded, grieved and bruised thee? Does he enjoin this Memorial of passed Kindnesses he has done for us, only to make us capable to receive of him more and greater for the Future, we being the sole Gainers thereby? We must be insensible to our Interest, if we *draw back and have no Pleasure therein*; we shall be barbarous to our Souls, and forsake our own Mercies, if we deny them this Comfort and Pledge of Bliss, and Food of Immortality.

O! my Christian Brethren, upon all the Accounts, with what Ardour ought we to desire to be frequent in the Commemoration of that Sacrifice which has taken away Sin, overcome Death, obtained eternal Redemption, and opened the Doors of everlasting Life for us! Thither let us all go devoutly, go and drink of the Blood of the Covenant, and taste of the Cup of the New Testament; there let us eat Christ, our Passover, that was sacrificed for us. Remembering only to eat and drink

in *Reverence and Faith*, in Forgiveness of all Wrongs, in Resolutions of better Obedience, and in the firmest Bands of Love to God, and Charity to all the World: There let us present the Sacrifice of a *broken and contrite Heart*, which has an *Odeur of a sweet Smell*. What more becoming Oblation to a crucified Saviour, than crucified Lusts and Passions? Let us therefore resolve to offer up our *Souls and Bodies*, to be a *Holy, Living, and Reasonable Sacrifice to God*; and then may we lift up our Eyes to the *Lamb that was slain to take away the Sins of the World*, and beseech him humbly to have Mercy upon our Unworthiness, and to hear our Prayer; then may we with Confidence look up to him, *whom we have pierced*, in Confidence of our Sins being pardoned, in Remembrance of all the Griefs he suffered. By his Agony and bloody Sweat, by his Cross and Passion, by his precious Death and Burial, we may be delivered, and enabled to perform all those Conditions of Duty upon which alone Pardon is promised: And let our Souls say Amen, So be it, Blessed Jesus: And so doing, let us here begin the Song of the Saints above.

Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing.

Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power, be unto him that sitteth on the Throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever, Amen,

Easter Day.

SERMON

The Twelfth.

*The Evidence of Christ's Resurrection.
The Certainty and Manner of ours,
in Consequence thereof.*

I COR. vi. 14.

*God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also
raise up us by his own Power.*

THIS Matter of Fact of our Lord's Resurrection, which we at this Day commemorate, being the most incontestable Demonstration of the Truth of our Religion, both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and likewise the chief Support and Comfort of Christians in this miserable Life,

I shall

- I. Enquire how God was concerned to bring it to pass.
- II. Into the Circumstances that bear Witness, that it was brought to pass.
- III. I shall treat of the Certainty and Manner of our own Resurrection, depending upon his, as its Ground and Pattern: *And will also raise up us by his own Power,*

IV. And

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IV. And *last*, infer some useful Lessons, in general, and in particular, from the Scope of this Text.

I. If we enquire how much God was concerned to bring it to pass, we shall find no less than his Veracity, Justice, and Mercy, all engaged in the Accomplishment.

1. His Veracity. The immutable Word of no less than two Persons of the *unchangeable* Trinity, had passed for it: Not to mention the Types in the Old Testament, as *Isaac's* being sacrificed and yet living; which, in *11 Heb. xiv. 17.* is made an express Figure of Christ's Resurrection; nor that of *Jonas* taken out of the Whale's Belly, by our Saviour's own Application, after he had been there three Days and three Nights; which would have been an insignificant Providence, if it had not been interpreted by its Anti-Type: We have the more sure Word of Prophecy predicting it in *Hosea vi. 2.* *After two Days shall he receive us, and the third Day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his Sight;* and that famous one of the Psalmist, urged to the Jews by St. Peter: *Thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, nor suffer thy Holy One to see Corruption.* Heaven and Earth may pass away sooner than one Jot or Tittle of a divine Promise can fail: *All Things written in the Prophets concerning him must come to pass:* There is a never-failing Connexion between a Prophecy and its Accomplishment; therefore the Resurrection of our Saviour must and did happen, *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by such or such a Prophet.*

Besides, in the New Testament, the Son of God, the second Person, obliged himself to effect it by his own Power, proposing it to the Jews, as the last and most convincing Testimony of the Divi-

nity

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ity of his Person and Doctrine. *Destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up again.* He seemed to put the whole Issue of his divine Cause, the proving to them his Godhead and Messiahship, upon the Success of this supreme Miracle, as the ratifying Argument and opening Key to all that he had yet done among them; effectually cutting off all possible Exception to his other Miracles, and consequently all Imputation of Imposture, as though performed by a higher Skill in Magick. And indeed his Mission into the World, all that he did or suffered for us in it, *the Example of his Life*, the whole Scheme of his Doctrines, his Sermons, Precepts, Promises, and Threats, received Life from thence; they all stood or fell with it. For, *if Christ is not risen*, our Christian Vertues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, must have *been all in vain*, and our Moral ones to no Purpose in an After-State: *Our Preaching vain, and we yet in our Sins.*

2. But God's Veracity was not only engaged to make good the Affirmative that *he is risen*, but his Justice was no less tied to it too.

In the whole Procedure of Christ's Sufferings, God the Father may be considered as a Law-giver exacting Satisfaction for Transgression, and Christ as a Person paying it down: For, though he was *pure and undefiled* from the least Spot of Sin, yet for our Sakes he was pleased to be as, and in the Stead of the greatest Sinner, by Imputation and Substitution taking on himself the ponderous Guilt of all the Transgressions of the Sons of *Adam*, to sustain their Punishment, and discharge their Debt, upon the Terms of believing and performing his Gospel. Now Christ Jesus, by his active and passive Obedience, the Sufferings of his Life, and Obedience to *Death, even the Death of the Cross*, having paid the utmost Farthing for us,

us, Divine Justice could not any longer have detained him in his Grave; seeing Payment cancels the Bond, and releases out of Prison.

And he having not only merited the Remission of our Sins past, but also the Rewards of Heaven, for our future Obedience; though he had paid down the Purchase of his inestimable Blood, he could not have gone and taken Possession, in our Name and Nature, till he resumed his Body from the Sepulchre where it was laid.

It had been hard Measure to so righteous, and blameless a Person, punished for no Demerit of his own, to see his Innocence as visibly eclipsed, as the Sun was then to the Eyes of the World, by such an ignominious Death, if it was not in order to shine out with greater Glory. In a Word, the same Justice of God, that was to be satisfied by his Death, did afterwards as much engage him to deliver him from it.

3. A third Attribute of God, and that which he most delights to be known by, his Mercy, was likewise concerned in this Affair, inasmuch as it could not otherwise so much have illustrated and display'd itself; for having, out of the infinite Riches of his Mercy and Grace, determined his Son to be our Saviour, and anointed him our Prophet, Priest, and King, the whole Œconomy of our Redemption must have miscarried; for not one of those Offices could be fully executed, but upon Supposition of his Resurrection: The Preaching the Gospel was to follow that as we find, *Luke xxiv. 47.* And the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, Ch. viii. ver. 4. says, if he were upon Earth, much less if he had continued in the Grave, he could not be a continual offering Priest; for how could he else have gone into the Holy of Holies of the Temple of Mankind, the Heaven of Heavens, and presented the atoning Blood

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Blood he had sacrificed, and with it make Intercession for the People, which is an essential, principal Part of the priestly Office? Our Justification therefore was begun in his Death, but perfected by his Resurrection. Thus says the Scripture, *he was delivered for our Offences, and rose again for our Justification.* Neither otherwise could he have executed his Regal Power, in the subduing our Enemies; for how could he triumph over his, and our *last Enemy, Death*, and *lead Captivity captive*, if he had remained a Slave and Captive to it himself? The Gates of Hell would have prevailed against him, and his Church both.

Having then so many of the Divine Attributes engaged to see this Work done, we may well conclude, (especially since there wanted no Power to effect it) that in the Fulness of Time it must come to pass. Which brings me to the

II^d general Head: To enquire into some of the Circumstances that bear Witness that it did come to pass. And the first Circumstance of the *Time when*, will also display another Attribute of God, *viz.* his great Wisdom, in ordering it at the publick Solemnity of the Passover, where *Jews* of almost all Nations and Languages upon Earth were assembled together; and, for that Reason, had the raising our Lord from the Dead been deferred longer than the third Day, the Opportunity of spreading the Fame of that Miracle, and of *Jesus*, throughout all the Countries of the *East and West*, far and near, might be lost; but as it was, all Nations might, from thenceforth, make Enquiry, and be informed about it by those of their own Country, who were upon the Spot.

As there is no Point in Scripture of greater Importance than this, being laid down by the Apostles as the Corner Stone to all Churches;
St.

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St. Paul calling it *his Gospel that Christ is risen again according to the Scripture*, 2 Tim. ii. 8. it had Need of the clearest and fullest Testimonies of all the rest; for whatever shakes the Credit of this makes the whole Fabrick of Salvation totter, as no Article of our Faith had more Adversaries at that Time to oppose it: The Philosophers, not enduring to hear of it, droll'd and derided it; or took St. Paul's preaching Jesus, and his Resurrection, as if he was a Setter-forth of a new God and a new Goddess: The Sadducees, a considerable Sect of the Jews, denied any Resurrection at all, either of the Just, or the Unjust: Simon Magus, and the Gnosticks, were of the same Opinion: Hymenæus and Philetus maintained that the general Resurrection was past; while others turned it to a meer Allegory. Accordingly, there is no Truth in the sacred Records, that the Holy Ghost has been so careful and curious (as I may say) to transmit to us, as this great Fundamental of Christ's Resurrection, which he effectually has done, by making use of all Proofs to ascertain it, at the same Time removing all Ground of Cavil from the Disbeliever, by setting down so many Testifications, in so many particular Circumstances, to vouch it. His implacable Enemies, the Jews, when they had procured his shameful Death; those busy Mockers that gnashed upon him with their Teeth, thought they had made an End of him, and made good their Scoff at a Saviour, that was not able to save himself; and began to say, now, that he lieth, let him rise up no more; yet, to make surer still, the High Priests and Scribes took all imaginable Care (which makes the Argument so much the stronger on our Side) to hinder, lest this last Error, as they called it, should prove worse than the first. No sooner was the Body of the King of the Jews laid

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laid in the Sepulchre, (their Malice persecuting beyond the Grave) but they set a Watch of no fewer than 60 Men, (as we are told a *Roman Custodia* consisted of) chosen Men, no doubt, adding their *Seal* to the Stone that shut it up; and all this was to prevent any Trick, and to guard it from the Attempts of his Disciples; who, had they had a Will, had neither Power nor Courage, nor yet Cunning to break open a Sepulchre, hewn out of a new entire Rock, as that was. There was no such Thing as a Back-door: How could they few, unarmed and dispirited as they were, force such a strong Guard? much less had they Money to bribe for the Proclamation of it, as the High Priest and Scribes actually did for Silencing, but Silencing in vain.

Had there been no trusty Watch set, there might have been some tolerable Pretence for saying, *his Disciples came by Night and stole him away*: But that they should be all asleep, to whom it was Death to be found napping in such Charges, or that they could tell what was done in their Sleep, is such a Dream of waking Men, such a stupid Lye, as confutes itself, and turns Evidence for the Resurrection of *Jesus*. No, the Soldiers unanimously gave in their Report; they felt the Earthquake, which would soon have shaken them out of their Slumber, if they had been in one; they saw the Countenance of an Angel, like Lightening amazing them; they shook, they became as dead Men, while their Charge became alive; and trembling, pale, and astonished, went with the surprising News to the Chief Priests; Whilst the Bodies of Saints arose, and went to the rest of the People in the City, (most probably of *Simon* and *Anna*, and others of recent Memory) and appeared to many of their Acquaintance.

But

But still all this might have been hushed up, if he had not appeared (as he did) to his Disciples, and shewed himself alive by many infallible Proofs; eating and conversing with them 40 Days after he was risen; and, lest they might, notwithstanding, mistake him for a Spirit, he exhibited his Body to their Touch, retaining still the Marks and Prints of the Nails and Spear. St. *Thomas's* Incredulity did the World the Service of searching to the Bottom of that Imagination, lest any thing, in Generations to come, might be imagined to shake that sure Ground of Christian Faith.

Nay, he appeared to above 500 Brethren at once, who all agreed in the same Relation; and, by spreading it abroad among the Jews, one would think it would have effectually removed that *Stumbling-Block* and *Rock of Offence*, a crucified Saviour, from all that heard of it, (as it actually did mollify Thousands of that obdurate Generation, and converted Millions of others;) for now their Messiah and King being represented in a pompous Appearance of a triumphant Conqueror over Death, suited and explained, in a superior Sense, the fond Ideas they had entertained of their Messiah's being a victorious King indeed and to Purpose, since he did not fail to subdue the Enemies of their Soul, greater and more dangerous ones than those of their State. Strange Prejudice, or Perverseness! Did not this take away the Veil from over their Eyes, and make them see him whom they had pierced, and readily own him for their long-expected Saviour and King, and become his Subjects? The bare relating these Matters of Fact, by Way of appealing to their own Knowledge, whereof so many were Eye-witnesses and Judges of the Truth of the Circumstances, without any other Argument,

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ment, was enough in Reason to have converted his very Judges and Prosecutors.

To others, who may as plainly *see* these Things by Revelation in Scripture, I shall add, that, though the principal Witnesses of this grand Occurrence were his chosen and select Disciples, yet their Testimony is the properest, the faithfulest, and most convincing that can be given to such a Matter of Fact done and past; since they were so certainly (as is required in capable Witnesses) informed of what they relate of this Matter, beyond a Possibility of Deception, and were besides illiterate, and unskilful in the Art of deceiving: They were simple enough concerning Evil, and withal professed and preached a Doctrine that forbad it upon Pain of Damnation; and, to put it past all Question of Sincerity, they endured all manner of Hardships and worldly Disadvantages for it; and, at last, with Joy sealed the Truth of it with their dying Blood. Those that will not believe such Apostles declaring, and so particularly describing, not only the Matter of Fact, but the Circumstances and Manner of the Resurrection; neither would they be persuaded, though *one rose from the Dead*; to bring them an Account of it; which leads me to treat of the

III^d Thing I propos'd, the Certainty and Manner of our Resurrection depending upon Christ's as its Ground and Pattern: *And will also raise up us by his Power.*

That the Resurrection of every one of our Bodies is possible, is proved already, from an Argument taken from the Instance and Example of Christ, which proves thus much at least, that whatever has been may be; and is the most intelligible one that can be given, being palpable to the Senses of all that then conversed with him, and full as credible to Posterity, carrying with it

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all the Evidence that Matter of Fact is capable of. I ask then, why should it be thought *a Thing impossible for God to raise the Dead*? since he has done it in the Person of our Saviour, and every Day does it in Nature. What is the Succession of Winter and Spring? What the Globe of the Earth, but a Grave or Sepulchre to the vegetable World? where the vital Powers are sealed up and buried in the Winter, yet in the Spring begin to revive, bloom, expand, and send forth a lively, a beautiful Resurrection of all the retired Beauties and Properties of vegetable Nature; every Grain that is in the Loaves we eat of dying, and corrupting in the Furrows of the Land, its temporary Grave, in order to rise again with Encrease. What are these but anniversary Emblems and Resemblances of a general Resurrection? Nay, we ourselves carry about daily Instances of it in our Bodies; for even these fleshly Bodies in our Life-time corrupt and revive, losing by Perspiration, and getting by Nutriment: These we have now are not probably the same, by the accuratest Accounts of Anatomy, we had seven Years ago; so that we may say in the Instant now, not that we *all shall be*, but *are* continually changed. What is our Sleep but a shorter Death, and our Beds but a shorter Grave, and our waking, but a quicker Resurrection?

'Tis very much, that the Philosophers, who have so elegantly represented these Images and Types, should be so dull in the Application: for when it came to the Test, though they differed sufficiently from themselves, and from one another, in their Notions and Principles, yet they unanimously agreed to pronounce the Resurrection of the same Flesh absurd and ridiculous; and those at Athens esteemed St. Paul a Novelist in Philosophy for proposing it.

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But leaving these Disputes to the same Apostle's clear Reasoning in their own Way, in the xvth Chapter of this Epistle, *i. e.* from the Absurdity of the contrary, which is *Argumentum ad Hominem*, I shall suppose the Thing in general certain, without Dispute, as a fundamental Article of our Faith should be to us. If the *first Fruits* are risen, the whole Lump will follow; if the Head, the Members must be quickened and joined with it.

This is the Ground of the Certainty of our Resurrection; I go on to shew how Christ's is the Pattern, as to the Manner of it.

Some Men are apt to ask, *how are the Dead raised up? and with what Bodies do they rise?* in the same, or in new?

In Answer to this Question, my Design is to assert the Identity of the self-same Body's rising that moulders in the Grave.

For the clearing this Argument, my Endeavour shall be to evince it from Scripture, Antiquity, and the * Reason of the Thing.

The first Proof I shall draw from Scripture is an Induction of Instances. I might reckon *Enoch* and *Elias's* Translation into Heaven in their terrestrial Bodies, who may be concluded to live there in the same Flesh and Parts they had when here upon Earth. I might mention the three raised from the dead in the Old Testament, and those recalled to Life by our Saviour in the New. But I chuse to insist upon the one Instance of himself, being, upon all Hands, agreed to be a Pat-

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* *Aurum Fulminans*, dissolved in *Aqua Regia*, precipitated with Salt of Tartar, and mixed with *Sal Armoniac*, will give a Report like a Gun, and vanish into Air, but may most of it be caught by a concave Vessel placed judiciously over the Top of the Room: This seems to be that Experiment which Mr. *Boyle* found out, and discovered to Bishop *Hacket*, to prove to him philosophically the Identity of the same Body's rising.

tern. and Type of our Resurrection, as our eldest Brother, and first Fruit from the Grave. Now nothing is more evident, in the History of the Evangelists, than that the Print of the Nails in his Hands and Feet, and of the Spear in his Side, were both seen and felt by his Disciples; which demonstrates that our Lord rose in that Body which was crucified and laid in the Sepulchre. Therefore, as Christ rose in his own proper numerical Body, so shall we rise in the Flesh we put off at our Dissolution.

Here the chief Objectors against this Conclusion are pressed, and therefore endeavour to evade the Force of it, by pretending, that though Christ rose in his crucified Body, yet, upon his Ascension, he received a glorious and spiritualized one, in the room of the other; but as this Conceit is destitute of all Foundation in Scripture, I conclude that this glorified Body can be no other but that crucified one, refined, adorned, and beautified in Qualities; which is no more than what we allow in the Resurrection of our vile mortal Bodies, which will arise the same in Substance of Flesh, and *Stamina* of Constitution, but altered as to their Properties greatly; for we shall be *fashioned like unto his glorious Body*.

The last Argument from Scripture (for I have not Time to enforce all) I take out of the xvth Chapter of this Epistle, ver. 53. *This corruptible shall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal shall put on Immortality*. I desire to know what is, or can be in the original Substantive τὸ φθαρτὸν, τὸ θνητὸν τῆτο, if it is not σῶμα; for Man must be corruptible either in Soul or Body, the two Principles of which he consists; if not so in the first, he must be corruptible only as to his Body; and then how can my corruptible Principle, or dead Body, be said to put on Incorruption, only be-
cause

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cause my Soul, as the Objectors contend, after a certain Period, is united to a quite other new, incorruptible Body? My Soul, in such a Case, puts on Incorruption; but this Body of mine by no Means, that rots still in the Grave. The *Sea*, and *Hell*, or the *Grave*, are said to *give up their Dead*; but, say they, what could they give up, but what was deposited in them, the Body? For the Spirit of every deceased Man *returns to God who gave it*:

To conclude this Head, it seems pretty plain that this identical Resurrection was the Doctrine delivered by *St. Paul*; for he must mean the Resurrection of the Dead, either in the same, or in a new Body substituted. If a new one, the Resurrection he argued for had been no more but a Transmigration of one Soul into different Bodies, which would have found an easy Reception in most of the *Greek Schools*: And therefore we may fairly infer he neither did intend, nor was understood to mean that, because it was so hard of Digestion to them. I might also subjoin those Places, where the Dead are said to *sleep* in the Dust, which intimates that we shall awake from Death in the same Bodies, as we do from our Beds.

But I hasten to my other Topick, Antiquity, which is the best Interpreter of Scripture.

And here it will be obvious to all that read, that the common received Opinion of the primitive Church was in Favour of the same Body, (some few inquisitive Fathers excepted, as *Origen* and others :) Forasmuch as the Belief of this Article was the great Support to the Constancy and Perseverance of its Martyrs and Confessors, who were persuaded, that though their Bodies were torn piece-meal by Racks and Saws, and devoured by wild Beasts, yet that every Par-

ticle of their martyred Flesh, though dissolved into the smallest Atoms, and scattered over the Face of the Earth; though they had underwent various Changes, had fructified the Earth, become Nourishment of Animals, and they the Food of other Men; yet they were persuaded, from the Consideration of the Power of God, who numbered their Hairs, that not one of them should perish: They knew him, whom they believed to be as able to call every one of them by Name, and bid them *come forth* from their Graves, as he did *Lazarus*; that whithersoever these Particles were scattered, and wheresoever lodged, yet should they all be recollected again at the Sound of the last Trumpet, and range themselves into the same Order, Figure, and Posture they were in before, so as to make the self-same Flesh and Blood that their Souls forsook at their Dissolution: And this was observed by their Persecutors, who endeavoured, but in vain, to deprive them of their Hopes, by dispersing their dead Ashes into the wide Air, and into Rivers.

Thus *Minutius Felix* argues; “ Though we
 “ are dried into Dust, or dissolved into Water,
 “ or scattered into Ashes, how can we be re-
 “ moved from the Sight of him that weighs
 “ Mountains in Scales, and numbers the Sands
 “ on the Sea-Shore?”

Moreover, it is argued by some of the Ancients, as a Proof of the same Bodies rising again, that the exact Justice of God would not be so illustriously manifested, unless the same individual Body of Flesh rose again, to be rewarded or punished, as the Partner with the Soul in its good or bad Deeds; for every one shall *receive according to what he has done in, or by the Body, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil.*

But,

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But, to strengthen this farther, the very Nature of the Thing is enough to satisfy us, which was my third and last Proof.

For what is the very Notion of a Resurrection, but a substantial Change, by which that which was before, and died, and was corrupted, is re-produced the same again? Or, shorter, a restoring a Creature to its former State of Life, by a Re-union of its first Principles, which, in Man, we said were Soul and Body, whose Union makes Life, and whose Separation causes Death. Now, the Soul being immortal and incorruptible, the Resurrection of the Dead can only signify the Resurrection of the Bodies of the Dead, seeing that which never fell cannot be said to be raised up, nor that which never died to be restored to Life: If God gives to our Souls, at the last Day, a new Body, it cannot literally be called the Resurrection of our Bodies; for here is no Re-production of the Body which was before, which is plainly implied in the Word Resurrection. And if the Separation of the Body and Soul, such old Acquaintance, is violent, the Desire of Re-union seems natural: They are incompleat Substances asunder, and long for Perfection, which is their Union; and, in this Sense, the *Spirits of just Men* departed may be said to be *made perfect*.

It remains only, in the IVth, and last Place, to infer some practical Lessons.

Hence we may learn, First, if there will be a Resurrection of this *Body*, to bear those Afflictions, Sickneses, and bodily Pains we are exercised with in this Vale of Misery; for the *Time of our Redemption draweth nigh*, the Redemption of our Bodies from those numberless Evils and Maladies they are here subject to continually: This is

the groaning Expectation of the Creature to be exempted from this Vanity. It is the best thing we can say of our wretched Bodies, which are *indeed* the *Burthen* of Flesh in our Life-time, as well as stiled so when we are put in the Grave, that they are not durable and lasting, but daily, of their own Accord, decaying, and tumbling into their original Dust; *that which is of the Earth is earthly*, hastening to finish the short Scene they were to act here, in order to be re-edified and polished, and appear soon upon another, gloriously shining like Stars. Now the Soul looks into the future State through the present Body, as *through a Glass, darkly*; but then the Glass will be brightened, the Grossness of the Flesh, the Clouds of Passion, and the Stains of Sin shall be wiped off, and we see clearly, even as we are seen. Wherefore let us *comfort one another with these Sayings*, that if we hold out a little longer, *all Tears shall be wiped from our Eyes for ever*; e'er long we shall be free from those tiresome, servile Drudgeries our rational Souls are forced to stoop to, beneath themselves, for the Support of their Bodies, to keep them tenantable: They will then enjoy uninterrupted Health, without needing, as we do now, Medicines for the Preservation of it; and those Robes of Glory that we shall be *clothed with* at the Resurrection of the Just, will never want repairing: "When our Flesh and Blood are spiritualized, and invigorated with the Warmth of the Sun of Righteousness, and our heavy Earth is calcined and purified for its true Employment, that it may serve the Soul in its swiftest Thoughts, and vie with the Seraphims of Light and Zeal, in their Attendance on their Creator. Now the earthly Tabernacle drags, and pulls down the Soul to low and despicable Enjoyments; then the Body is made strong, and

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and refined, to comply with the highest Capacities and Inclinations of the Mind. We shall mount aloft from the Earth into the Air, we shall *shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever*, when we are got loose from the Prisons of Darkness, and the Fetters of Corruption are broken of. How strongly do we then feel ourselves united to our true and immoveable Happiness, and assimilated to the blessed Temper and Employment of the Hosts of Heaven, and Spirits of just Men made perfect, when, instead of the uneasy Weight that holds our Spirits in Captivity, we shall then be clothed with a House from Heaven, when *Mortality shall be swallowed up of Life.*"

We have all launched out from the Shore of Life, and some of us have sailed a good Way, and cannot be very long before we arrive at the Coast of Eternity, where we shall be out of the Reach of those Storms and Dangers that toss and agitate us here. Let us all then persevere unto the End with Patience and Constancy, and we shall receive abundant Recompence for all the Troubles and Hardships we sustained in our Passage; let us *stedfastly hold fast to our Profession* and Duty, whatever we may lose or suffer for it here, knowing we shall *reap, if we faint not*; and that if we *drink of the Brook in the Way*, taste his bitter Cup, Christ will lift up our Heads.

2. Let this Consideration arm us especially against the Fear of Death; for now the King of Terrors is conquered and disarmed, his Scepter broken, and his Sting taken out: It is nothing but the Shadow of Death now, and no more but a welcome *nunc dimittis*, a departing in Peace to the *Righteous and Pure*; let us then, in the first Place, become such, and then expect our Dissolution with Courage and Alacrity,

And,

And, that we may every one take care to be so, is the

Last Instruction recommended in the Text: Christ died and rose again, we ought also to be conformable to him, *die to our Sins, and rise again to Newness of Life*: If he loosed the Bands of Death, and came out of the Grave, we should loose those of our Iniquity, and ascend out of the Grave of sinful Conversation: If his Body *saw no Corruption*, let us not harbour any Filthiness of Flesh in our immortal Souls.

This is the chief Enforcement of the Text being brought in, in this Chapter, as a Reason and Dehortation to lay aside Fornication, and all other impure Appetites of the Flesh, teaching us in Prospect of this Resurrection, to deny its Solicitations, and subdue and mortify its carnal Desires, and wean ourselves from bodily Pleasures, that we may the better fit and dispose our Souls for their new Habitation, making them acquainted with it before-hand, which we may do by spiritualizing them in a great Degree; for they are capable of being *Temples of the Holy Ghost*, as is supposed in the 19th Verse after the Text, if we purify and hallow them as we ought.

And when we have cleansed them fit to be such August Temples, we have this Comfort when they come to be dissolved, that they shall be built up better again; and, as it was said of the first and second *Jewish Temples*, the Glory of our latter House shall be greater than the former.

To conclude, it will little avail that Christ rose from a temporal, unless we also rise from a spiritual Death; for if we do not imitate it in that Effect, as well as believe it in a literal Sense, we must expect no Benefit from it. We must now walk before God in the Land of the Living, if we desire to live with him for ever; a timely Resur-

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Resurrection to Holiness is the only, the never-to-be-forgotten Condition of attaining that in Glory; there is but one Way to make the Resurrection of Christ to become ours, which is, to bring it down from Speculation to Practice: Without this Application we shall only be prejudiced by it at the Hour of Death, and Day of Judgment. As it is therefore his Resurrection-Day, so let us correspond to its Design, and make it ours by rising from Sin; and, if we are *risen with Christ*, to *set our Affections on Things above*.

We were initiated expressly into this very Profession, when we took the Name of Christ; let us remember always that Baptism doth represent unto us our Profession, which is to follow the Example of our Saviour Christ, and to be *made like unto him*, that as he died, and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from Sin, and rise again unto Righteousness; continually mortifying our evil and corrupt Affections, and daily proceeding in all Virtue and Godliness of living. There is no other Way, but in these Resolutions, of being worthy Communicants, and Renewers of our Baptismal Covenant. These Prospects beyond the Grave, if duly attended to, will moderate our Value and Love of the Riches of this perishable World, and dispose us cheerfully, for the Sake of him who died for us, to distribute to his needy Members, and destitute Families on Earth, as God has blessed us, in Hopes of the promised Blessings in Glory and Immortality, after the first Resurrection. There is no other Way of being worthy of having a Part in the first Resurrection, that the second Death may have no Power over us.

Now the God of Peace, that brought again the Lord Jesus from the Dead, that great Shepherd of the

the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is pleasing in his Sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honour and Glory.



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First Sunday after *Easter*.

S E R M O N

The Thirteenth.

*The Peace of a good, and Terrors of
an evil Conscience, especially at the
Approach of Death.*

JOHN xx. 19.

*The same Day at Even, being the first Day of the
Week, when the Doors were shut where the Dis-
ciples were assembled for Fear of Jews, came
Jesus and stood in the Midst, and saith to them,
Peace be unto you.*

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IN the 21st Verse, Jesus saith to them again,
Peace be unto you. The first Fruits of the
Resurrection we find to be *Peace*, which com-
prehends almost all Blessings in it. It is
repeated twice to shew the Certainty of it to his
desponding Disciples, who were, surrounded with
Fears and Sorrows from without (being at that
Juncture actually met together for Fear of the
Jews)

Jews) and disconsolate also from within, as *Men without Hope*.

But now the Prince of Peace, who came into the World, and laid down his Life to make Reconcilement betwixt God and Man, was risen from the Dead, and appeared in Person to dispel their gloomy Apprehensions, to verify and make good the *glad Tidings of great Joy and Peace on Earth*, which the Heavenly Host resounded at his Nativity; and, after he returned from the Mansions of the Dead, to fill them, and all faithful Followers of the Lamb, with all Joy and Peace in Believing, and to make them abound therein more and more, they might inwardly triumph, that their Enemies, whom their Souls stood in Dread of, were conquered, that a Pardon of their Sins, and their Justification before God, were ready to be pleaded and sealed in Heaven upon easy Conditions of Obedience; and that *a Door of Entrance into a glorious Immortality was set open*, as their Encouragement and Hope of Reward, a Hope worthy the Blood of Christ, the Purchase and the Foundation thereof.

I would now consider the Peace which our Saviour here pronounces, as it is the Promise, as it is the Fruit of his Kingdom of Righteousness, namely, *Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost*, as it is the last and great Legacy which our Lord bequeathed to his Disciples before his Death, in the 14th of John. *Peace I leave with you; my Peace I give unto you*: Where the Expression is redoubled, because the Importance of it was so great to them. All other Blessings, in which the mistaken World place their Felicity, his Disciples might haply be without; but this Peace of Mind, this Joy of Conscience, in which the true Happiness of Man consists, should be the Portion of his Followers; as it is great in present Sentiment

and Possession, and much greater in Expectation to come. This is the Life, the Joy, the Consolation and Pledge of Happiness to every true Christian. To seek for Happiness from the Things of this World, is to seek the Living among the Dead: *It is not here, it is risen*; it is above, it is only in Heaven, in God, and in the Practice of Religion, and walking in those Ways that will carry us thither: But, great as this Blessing is, it is here made over to none, nor promised to be enjoyed by any, but those who love God's Law.

These Words then do naturally bespeak our Meditation on these two Things;

I. The Blessing itself.

II. The Manner of attaining it.

First, As to the Blessing itself, *Peace* is a Thing of that endeared, that charming Sound, and carries such delectable Enjoyment with it, that we are all sooner or later desirous of it: *Pacem te poscimus omnes*: It is for the dear Sake of that, we arm by Sea to defend ourselves from Enemies, who would disturb and invade the Settlement and Tranquillity, civil and religious, to the actual Disturbance of Trade and Navigation, and the threatened Invasion of our Enjoyments; the Hope of that makes us undergo chearfully the Taxes that support it, which is an Evil neither justifiable nor indurable upon any other Account, or Prospect, than making a Security for that; and the more grievously any Side tastes of that Evil, the more desirous are they of the contrary Good, when they come to sober Counsels.

Peace also in the Neighbourhood, among ourselves, is exceeding dear and choice, earnestly to be wished and zealously promoted by all Means; as it would exempt us from Strife, Envy, Variance,

riance, Censure and false Judgments of one another, which estrange the Acquaintance, abate the Pleasure, and imbitter the Blessing of Society. If then this worldly external Peace is so valuable to our Enjoyment, what is that internal Tranquillity and Peace of Conscience, which can only make us easy and satisfied with ourselves? For what avails our being at Peace with all the World, which can only hurt our Body, or make ravage upon our Goods or Name, while we are at Enmity with God, our own Sins and Conscience condemning us, and our Passions at War and in Tumult within our Breasts?

This spiritual and inward Peace, therefore, is that which the Kingdom of Jesus came to plant in us, and should in the first Place be sought after by every one of us, as what most intimately and infinitely concerns us all, being the Foundation of our Happiness, and without which there can be no Enjoyment, either in this World or the next: It is that only which can be assuredly lasting, because nothing can disturb or break it, but by our own Fault.

As desirable a Thing as Peace with the World abroad, and with our Neighbours at Home is, yet they may be both out of our Power, though we have done our Parts and Duties, and all that in us lies, to effect them. I would *shew unto you therefore a more excellent Way*: I would propound unto you a Peace which is in every Man's Power to secure. It is the greatest Blessing in all Nature; yet it is that which every Man may bestow upon himself: But it is to be had only in the Way of Innocence and Righteousness, and the doing those Things which secure the Favour of God, and the Hopes of his Blessed Promises: *Great Peace have they*, says the holy Psalmist, *who keep thy Law*: And another of the
Prophets

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Prophets, that the *Work of Righteousness is Peace, and the Effect of Righteousness is Peace, and Quietness, and Assurance, for ever.* The vast Comforts and mighty Advantages whereof will appear more particularly in these several Respects following.

1. As it secures the inward Calm and Serenity of Mind, when all the disorderly Passions, which are the greatest Enemies to our Peace, are under Government and Subjection to the Laws of Wisdom and Decency, Virtue and Reason; in which all the wise Heathens placed their Happiness, and many of them the sole Reward of Virtue: Very glorious Things they have spoken, they have boasted of upon that Head, in representing the Tranquility of that Mind, which observes and conducts itself in all Things by the Dictates of Reason; comparing it to a continual Feast, for the Pleasure it affords; to a calm Sea and serene Sky, as being unruffled with uneasy Storms and Tempests, which destroy its Composure; to Music, as being all Harmony within; to Health, as when the Faculties of the Mind are in full Vigour and Strength of Cheerfulness, being put to their right Use, and freed of these inward Diseases and Disorders, those Wounds and Akins which arise out of contrary Practices, and carry greater Pain and Anguish than those of the Body.

But how short and flat are any of these in Comparison of those superadded Joys of Christianity, which spring up in the Mind of a good Christian, upon the Sense of having his Sins pardoned, and a comfortable Assurance of Favour and Friendship with God, secure of the Smile and of the *Light of his Countenance* flowing from the Communications of the blessed Spirit, the Comforter, through the Assurance of exalted Glory to come,

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which altogether make up *the Peace of God which passeth Understanding*; an infinitely greater Happiness than all the World can afford? The Children of this World can indeed conceive nothing of it: For these are Joys which *Strangers intermeddle not with.*

The Sense of having our Sins and Iniquities pardoned, in and through Christ, upon our true Repentance, and that, upon the Observance of the Terms and Conditions of the Gospel, we are in a State of Justification by the free Grace thereof, and that the Sincerity of our Obedience shall entitle us to the glorious Immortalities and Felicities which belong to the Christian Salvation; what an unspeakable Comfort is this for the Soul to reflect on? To be freed of those Fears and Horrors, the natural, the almost-inseparable Consequence of conscious Guilt, which rakes and tares, rebukes and upbraids the most sensible Part of the Mind; which continually galls the Conscience, and preys upon the Heart of the Sinner? Be he in ever such a prosperous Condition, and outwardly invested with all that the World calls Happiness; yet, if we look within the Man, where the Seat of all Enjoyment lies, none can be called more miserable and wretched than he: For as long as Happiness lies in our Minds, and within ourselves, no Man can be made happy by any Thing without him: While his evil Mind is disordered and uneasy, it will be miserable, though it had every Thing besides.

“ As Rain from the Clouds, which waters the Earth, proceeds *actually* from the Earth, by Evaporation through the Attraction of the Sun; so the Comfort which must refresh and water any Man's Conscience must proceed from Conscience itself, bearing Witness *before God*, that the Man does his Duty

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Duty the best he can." Nor Wealth, nor Quality, nor Learning, nor Comeliness, nor Strength, will commend thee, O Man. *But what does the Lord thy God require, but to do Justice, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* These are the good Works that must gain Acceptance with the impartial God. If they are neglected and despised, and no *Delight* taken in *the Law of God*, nothing but Remorses smite the Man inwardly, and the Misgivings, Reproaches and dread Expectations from his own Deservings, torture and amaze his Thoughts: It is in vain to divert them with Company or Business; they will sometimes return again with Fury in private; and the Hand-writing on the Wall, inditing the Wrath of God to his Soul, and the dreadful Sound in his Ear, pronouncing the Judgments and Vengeance of an incensed Almighty Power, will make his Heart tremble, drink up his Spirits, and render the bodily Enjoyments joyless, and the Pleasures of Sense tasteless to him. This Disquietude within a Man has been compared to a Worm gnawing the Vitals, a Vultur preying on the Liver, a Snake stinging to the Heart, a Fury whipping with Scorpions. And yet all this is but the Beginning of Sorrows! So great Reason had holy Job to represent the *Triumphing of the Wicked to be but short, and the Joy of the Hypocrite but for a Moment*; and though Wickedness is *sweet in the Mouth*, though it is *hid under his Tongue*, yet *his Meat in his Bowels is turned into the Gall of Asps within him*; and though he has swallowed down Riches yet he shall vomit them up again, and in the Fulness of his Sufficiency he shall be in Streights, and a Fire unblown shall consume him. This is the Portion of the wicked Man from God; which put him upon that wise Resolution he acquaints us with, of not parting with his Integrity, and of taking effectual Pre-

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caution, that his Heart should not reproach him so long as he lived. Other holy Pen-men describe the Wicked to be *like the troubled Sea, whose Waters continually cast up Mire and Dirt: That Misery and Destruction is in their Paths: The Way of Peace have they not known; and that whoever goes in their crooked Path, should not know Peace.* And the Psalmist, who well knew the Remorses of a guilty Mind, affirms, *That Fearfulness and Trembling was come upon him, and a horrible Dread had overwhelmed him; and another assures, That Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, shall be upon every Soul that doth Evil.* Whereas, with the Godly, it is not so, he is free from the Fear of Evil, and void of those tremendous Expectations: *Glory, Honour, and Immortality* glad his Spirit with exquisite Exhilaration, and diffuse unutterable Joy and Cheerfulness all over him: He shall be *girded with Gladness*, he shall be *satisfied from himself, tasting and feeling how gracious the Lord is:* For the *Blood of Christ speaks Peace to his Soul, and pours in Oil to refresh his wounded Conscience, and, by the Privilege of Repentance and new Obedience, restores it to Comfort and Rejoycing, and a firm Hope of the Promises upon the Performance of his Duty.* And, while he submits himself entirely to the easy Yoke of Christ, he finds mighty Rest and Tranquility in his Soul, by discharging that Burden of Sin, and the Load of Guilt, too heavy to bear: This is the *Jewel of the Gospel of inestimable Price, which if a Man knew the Value of, he would sell all he has to purchase, rather than be without:* For it makes a Man happy and pleased with himself in all Conditions, enables him to bear any Circumstances, and endure whatever Evil, Affliction, or Reproach shall happen to him.

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2dly, This is another Advantage of that Peace of Mind; and a very considerable one it is, since the Miseries and Misfortunes of this Life are so many, and happen indifferently to the Good and the Bad in general. Being by Condition all born to Trouble, as the Sparks fly upwards, happy is he that is provided with Support under them, and Armor against them, and the best Retreat that can be had under the Cares and Sorrows of this Life present. But nothing in this Case is comparable to a good Conscience, and the Consolations of God's Favour and Spirit, and the Assurance of better Things to come: This will make the upright Christian bear up with undaunted Courage, more than human, against the Pressures of Fortune and the Calamities of this World. Though all is Storm and Tempest and black Clouds without, yet it overcasts not his calm Mind; Serenity and Evenness is there still in as full Measure as before; for he trusteth in his God, and in that Trust he knows he shall not miscarry. What, though Enemies are very bitter, and enraged against the Godly, without any Offence of theirs; yet, knowing the Almighty is their Friend, and has still a Kindness for them; though the World hate them, yet, as long as he loves them, and does not deprive them of the Light of his Countenance, and the Prospect of Heaven in this Dispensation; it is more, and should be more, to them, than all the World; for they have *Peace* in themselves, and in Christ, who suffered all the Tribulation of this World to sanctify those that should befall them.

What are the reproachful Defamations of this unjust World, which proceed from Malice or Ignorance, so long as the Heart within does not reproach the Man, and accuse him guilty to himself. Though they curse, yet he will bless, and feed upon the ineffable Comforts of a clear-ac-

quitting Conscience, and taste those Joys which no Man can take from him, and please himself with that Honour and Reputation with which he is esteemed before God, who *judgeth righteously*. They need fear no Evil, though they walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, since he is with them, and his Rod and Staff ready to lay hold on, and to comfort them.

This animated the primitive Sufferers with unusual Alacrity in all their unparallell'd Adversities; they rejoiced in their Chains and Prisons, they sang Praises and acted Triumphs, as if they were more than Conquerors; their outward Torments were scarce felt or minded, so much greater were their Transports of Joy within: For the Lord lights their Candle, and makes all their Darkness to be Light; and joyful Gladness springs up at such Times to those that are true hearted: Righteousness is Satisfaction enough within-Doors, and conscious Innocence will marvellously buoy up and invigorate the Spirits, and preserve them from Despondency.

But when Sorrow and Trouble lay hold of the Ungodly, they are bereaved of Hope, they are wretchedly void of Comfort; their Sins and Guilt double their Afflictions, and give a keen Edge to them, foreboding yet more terrible Things to come. They have nothing to flee to; for Religion is no otherwise a Joy and Comfort to Man, than as it cures him of all that is irregular in his Passions, or as there is Hope that it will heal and make him whole: But what Hopes of such, when there is not Time to finish it? God, who is the only present Help in Trouble, is become their Enemy and Avenger, and now sets his Face against them, to call their Sins to Remembrance, and to consume them, because they had so long turned their Backs upon him: And, when they cast up the Account

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count of their evil Doings, they are *laid waste in Sorrows*; and become speechless, and comfortless, and their own Iniquities convince them to their Face: Horror and Tempest is their Portion to drink, and there is nothing to sweeten their Cup or alleviate their Grief. Death, which is the common Deliverer out of insupportable Evils, they well know is but the Commencement of great Woe and fiery Destruction! Or, if the Sinner disbelieves a future State, yet he can never get rid of a Doubtfulness whether there is one or not (it being impossible for the greatest Atheist to be certain of the Negative) and, while there remains any Suspicion that it is but possible to be, it must confound him with Anxiety enough to make him very disconsolate and wretched. But if he believes the Punishment of the Wicked in another Life, and has lived all his Days as if there was no such Thing, how compleatly miserable is he when he comes to die!

This is a 3^d and most especial Benefit and Prerogative the good Man has, that he has Peace at the last: For when we come to die is the great Difference betwixt Virtue and Vice, a good and bad Man, one that feared God, and one that feared him not: For then all Masks of Hypocrisy fall off, and there is no longer dissembling with God or Man. But the Wicked, when he comes to depart this Life, all his deluding Pleasures and Enjoyments forsake him, a horrible Dread overwhelms him, and Confusion meets him on all Hands: His Soul stands aghast at the amazing Apprehensions of the Eternity to be entered upon, is horribly afraid and ready to die away at the Thought of being now just going to be translated to that everlasting Punishment which it so well knows it has deserved, and the *Blackness of Darkness* over-shadows the Soul as it is about to sink

into the Regions of Darkness for evermore ; and when he remembers the Transgressions that have brought him to this, he is filled with outrageous Indignation at himself, for not embracing the Opportunity of repenting in Time, which he was so often invited to, so often convinced of the Necessity of. Therefore, now his Sins stare him in the Face, and the everlasting Burnings due thereto begin to flash in his Conscience ; and, in this his Hour of Death and Day of Judgment there is *none* to deliver him, or have Mercy on him ; But the Bottomless Pit is open before him, and there is none to rescue. For God hath forsaken him, turns away his Ears that had been so often insulted with Wickedness, and takes his turn of despising and *laughing at his Calamity* : For what Friend, or Minister, can speak Peace, or Comfort, to his wretched Soul, upon the Terms of the Gospel where God and Christ speak no Peace, but utter Destruction ? What Peace, so long as their Avarice, their sinful Pleasures, their Injustice, their Impieties are so many, and they have so long neglected that *great Salvation* which their Saviour came into the World and died to obtain to them the Opportunities of securing ? For God is just as well as merciful, and will be glorified in the Punishment of them, who would not accept the Profers of his Mercy in their Life and Health, that only *acceptable Day of Salvation*, and Season when it took Place. Therefore the *Sting of Death* comes with all its dreadful Plagues upon his desponding Soul, the Worm of Conscience perforates him through and through, from the Crown of his Head to the Sole of his Foot, with the *sharp Arrows of the Almighty's Anger*, and the *Stings of his hot Displeasure* ; the Drops of his fiery scalding Wrath surround him like a Furnace, and Peals of insupportable Vengeance sound louder and louder

louder in his Ears : And what then are the Horrors, what must be the Amazement thereof !

This desperate Condition, dreadful to be thought of, which habitual Sin unrepented of before Death brings Men to, is applicably represented in those dismal Colours of the wise Man. * *The Prisoners of Darknes* (says he) *are fettered without Iron in the Bonds of a long Night. They lie exiled from the eternal Providence ; for, while they supposed they lay hid in their secret Sins, they are horribly astonished and troubled with strange Apparitions : Noises of Waters falling down sound about them, and sad Visions of Fiends appear to them with heavy Countenances ; neither could the bright Flames of the Stars lighten that horrible Night, only there appear'd unto them a Fire kindled of itself very dreadful. For, being much terrified, they thought the Things that they saw to be worse than the Sight they saw not ; they died with Fear, and the Succors that Reason offered betrayed them ; and, sleeping that intolerable Sleep, which came upon them out of the Bottoms of inevitable Hell, they fainted, their Heart failed, and they swooned away ; over them was spread a heavy Night, an Image of that Darknes, which should afterwards receive them, but yet were they unto themselves more grievous than the Darknes.* Thus far he ; and what a dreadful and true Description is this of a guilty Conscience, enough to make us shake and tremble at the Apprehension of it ? Yet it is most certain, that Words cannot reach to express the Misery of it, and God grant that none of us may ever feel it.

If it is objected to this, that very many notorious Sinners, and profligate Livers, seem to have no Sense or Smart of these Things, and appear to go out of the World in a tolerable seeming Tranquility ; I answer, that this Insensibility is only an Effect

* *Wisd.* xvij.

Effect of the Hardness of their Hearts, not yet awakened by God with a Sense of their Guilt and Deservings. We are told in Scripture of some Sinners, who, by a long Course of Iniquities, have *seared their Conscience, as it were, with a hot Iron*; as insensible to the Things of God, and of another World, as a *Rock* or a *Mill-stone*: So much are they past Feeling, that Fear itself will make no Impression on them; for they can hear of the Pains of Hell-Fire, and the Retributions of Wrath, which will be the certain Wages of their Transgressions, (without a seasonable Repentance and Return to their Duty) without any Endeavours, nay, without any Concern about Repentance, and Newness of Life. What think you? Is not this their Insensibility as far from the Health of the Soul, as a Numbness, or Palsy, is from the healthful State of the Body? Surely it is one of the greatest Judgments that can befall a Man that is born of a Woman. The other Threatening, therefore, holds experimentally true, in all profligate Consciences, as soon as ever they become effectually touched with the Sense of their Sins. And, oh! that the Grace of God, and the Apprehension of those Things that are coming upon them, may, in Time, soften their obdurate Hearts with a Remembrance of their Sins, and the Danger of their deferring, and putting the evil Day far from them, while there is yet a Space for Repentance, and a Prospect for escaping the horrible Punishment that is overtaking them; for the Son of Sirach assures them, * *That an obstinate Heart shall be laden with Sorrow, and fare evil at the last*: And, when they come to feel it, they would freely give all their worldly Goods, which they so anxiously gathered up, for a good Conscience, which they so carelessly neglected, through their Love of Sin.

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But if we turn to the good and righteous Man, and behold him, who has made it his Business to live in the Fear of his God, and to serve him in Sincerity and Truth, and repented him duly of the Transgressions of his Law, and daily endeavoured to grow better, and amend what was amiss in his Thoughts, Words and Actions, and to correct all his Omissions, and do so no more, how happy, how blessed is such a one, when he comes to die? He has no known, wilful Sin to repent him of, and his Heart nothing upon that Score to condemn him for. What Confidence has he in God! *his Rejoicing is this, even the Testimony of his Conscience; that in Simplicity, and godly Sincerity, he has had his Conversation in this World;* the Guilt of all his repented Sins, he knows, by the Assurances of the Gospel of Grace, shall be *washed away in the Blood of Christ*, who died for them, and *rose again for his Justification*: All his Infirmities and involuntary Sins shall be overlooked in the perfect Obedience of Christ. What exceeding great Joy must diffuse into his Soul, and fill him with the Hopes of a most glorious, which is also an eternal Duration of Bliss! What Peace and Tranquility will be present to support him in his last Agonies and Extremities!

True it is, that some Exceptions there have been, and may be again, of good Men and Women, who have been under great Uneasinesses and Disorders at the Approach of Death, and seem to be destitute of these Joys of Conscience, even though it acquits them of Insincerity in Performance of their Duty, and attests that they have done their best; but this is owing to the present Disorders of the dissolving Body, which is apt to make them *fear, where no Fear is*; or else it is sometimes owing to superstitious, mistaken Notions of God Almighty: In either of which Cases

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it is only particular to some few Persons and Constitutions, and affects not the other Truth : For it is as unhappy a Delusion to doubt of one's Salvation, when they have observed the Terms of it, as it is to presume, with too many others, when they have not lived up to them.

But generally, as to the good Man, all the Comforts of Religion, and a well-spent Life, come in to his Assistance, when he has the most Need of them : He is illuminated with the Hopes of a happy Immortality, and cherished with joyous Things, in the Sense of the Favour of God, through a good Conscience of doing his best to please him ; so far from fearing Death, that he *desires to be dissolved, and to be with Christ*, and have his *Nunc dimittis* in Peace. The Pleasure of this closing Scene of Life is so inexpressibly gladsome, that he thinks it worth all the Hardships and Self-denials that he underwent in his Life : His Comforts must needs overflow, when he sees himself out of Danger of the Temptations of this World any more, and is now going to be translated, to receive that Kingdom and Crown, which are promised to reward his Conquest over Temptation, and all his past Labours of Love ; and, as he is expiring, his Joy encreases, and shoots up into an Eternity, which *neither Eye hath seen, nor Ear heard, nor Heart yet been able to comprehend* the Greatness of the Ingredients of its Happiness ; his Brook of Joy becomes a River, and his River becomes a Sea : So true is that of Solomon, *that the Path of the Just is as a shining Light, that shineth more and more unto perfect Day ; and no other but he hath Hope in his Death.*

Which brings me to the

II^d Thing proposed, to specify the Manner of attaining this Peace ; and that is, in brief, in
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being Servants unto God, and true Disciples of Christ, and so loving their Commandments, as to keep and do them; for it is these only that he salutes in the Text, and to these only, and all faithful Christians, does he leave his blessed Legacy, which is more than an Equivalent to all the other Things of this World, in the Possession of which we shall be happy, in any, the most afflicted, and poorest Condition in it; and, without it, uneasy and miserable, in any, the greatest Abundance of its Goods, and Appearance of its Pleasures.

Is it to the Disciples then, that this Promise of Peace is made? let us all take Care to be of that Number, as ever we hope to have a Portion of it. Now Christ has plainly shewed who are his Disciples; *Hereby*, says he, *all Men shall know ye are my Disciples, if ye bear much Fruit*: Nor is there any other Way, whereby we can evidence to ourselves that we abide in him, who is the Root whence all the Branches do grow, and receive vital Strength and Vigour: If we do not bear Fruit, through his Influence, which is not wanting, we shall be dried up and withered, fit to be cut off, and thrown into the Fire, as unworthy the Culture bestowed upon us.

Again, another especial Mark, which he has set down of his Disciples, is, that we *love one another*, in Imitation of that Love, which he has shewed towards us: *Hereby shall Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love to one another*. How unlike then are we to his Disciples, while we bite and devour one another with Party-Divisions; while we speak hard Things, and think worse upon those unjustifiable Occasions? How far are we from being conscientious Observers of that Gospel of Peace, and of that peaceful, loving Temper, which is its principal Design to promote amongst Men?

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But neither are we Christ's Disciples, unless we practise uniform Obedience to his Commands; for, says he, *If I am your Lord and Master, then do those Things which I command you*: And if we do not, if we wilfully transgress or omit any one Thing that he has enjoined us, we have no Title to be his Disciples, or to that divine Peace which is assured to them: One Sin will destroy us as well as many, and break the Tranquility of our Mind, as often as we reflect thereon. Though unfinning Obedience is not expected, sincere Performance and Endeavours are indispensable; speedy Repentance must heal and reform us as often as we fall; and that is all the Innocency, and Uprightness that we can attain unto; and it is that which the Grace of the Gospel indulges to our corrupt Natures.

Lastly, if fearful Apprehensions naturally spring in the guilty Mind; if every Sinner sows the Seeds of Remorse and Anguish within himself, which he is certain one Day to reap, as ever he intends to repent; why should he so foolishly, so inconsistently, without Fear, go on to multiply his Fears and Troubles? Sin provides for, and considers only the present, which is a very transitory Moment at the longest, but it is excluded all Hopes and Comfort in the Futurity ensuing; nothing avails it beyond the Grave, but Misery and Damnation. The Sting and the Horror of wicked Doings, persisted in, are everlasting, the Pleasure thereof but momentary: Why rather should we, or can we, in our Senses, pursue that as a Pleasure, which is sure to rob us of an infinitely greater Satisfaction of Mind in resisting it? All the Trouble that is in Repentance, is, on the other Hand, very short, and the Pleasure, and the Peace thereof perpetual. We know that

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we must all die some Time or other; why, therefore, if we have any Wisdom or Forecast, do not we lay in Provision for that we are sure must come? Nay, why are not we so wise for ourselves as to make our Lives, at present, as easy as we can, and, by that Means, lay in a Stock of Consolation, to refresh and solace us under the Losses and Afflictions, which our Condition is so subject to? And, if we desire to *die the Death* of good Christians, and that our *last End* may, like *theirs*, be full of Peace and Comfort, let us every one take *Heed to our Ways*, that our Life be *truly Christian*, abounding in *Love and good Works*. In a Word, listen we all to the Messengers that teach the Ways of Peace, that we may *understand the Things which belong to our everlasting Peace*, before they are *hid from our Eyes*. And may the God of Grace improve the Consideration of these Things to every one of us, for the Sake of *Jesus Christ*!



Third Sunday after *Easter*.

S E R M O N

The Fifteenth.

*The several Acceptations of Liberty
in Scripture. Restraints on Li-
berty.*

1 PET. ii. 16. Part of the Epistle of the Day.

*As free, and not using your Liberty as a Cloak of
Maliciousness.*

LIBERTY is a Thing so exceeding
dear to Mankind, that they are, in all
Instances of it, more for stretching
beyond its Rule and Measure, than
abridging it. The Christian Liberty, spoke of
in the New Testament, we find had been abused
three several Ways, which gives as many Accep-
tations to the Word. 1. We read the ill Use
those made of it, whom St. Paul reproves, Rom.
vi. 1, 15. for presumptuously *sinning the more*
in order that the *Grace of God might abound the*
more. This is a Scope of Liberty that all loose
Livers would be glad of, i. e. a libertine
Freedom to Sin, as long as they please, and
never

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never repent, which he shews to be so far from being a real Liberty, that he proves it to be a Contradiction to it, a genuine Servitude; and our Saviour before him had declared the same to the Jews, in his Dialogue, *John* viii. 34. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth Sin is the Servant of Sin.*

Some of the first Converts from *Judaism* were so mistaken as to imagine, that, since the Christian Religion, which they had embraced, had set them free from the Bondage, by repealing the manifold Incumbrances, and servile Performances of the ritual, perplexing Part of the *Jewish* Law, and the Rigour and Severity wherewith it was exacted, it had also, in good measure, exempted them from their Obligation to the moral, which our Blessed Saviour (as it were, to prevent and dissolve all such Suppositions, and dangerous Suggestions) declared at first, that it was *not* the least in his Intention to destroy, but to fulfil it; not to relax an Obedience, intrinsically, and for ever good, but to improve and enforce it upon his Followers. We have, accordingly, the Apostle St. Paul reasoning and reprehending such Converts, *Gal. v. 13. For, Brethren, ye have been called to Liberty [from the Jewish unseafible Yoke;] only use not Liberty, says he, for an Occasion to the Flesh.*

A Second Misuse of Liberty we find condemned in some of the *Corinthians*, by the Apostle, in his 1 *Ep.* to them, Ch. viii. from ver. 7. to the End, which proceeded from an uncharitable Temper in Things indifferent: The Case was eating Flesh offered to Idols, (as most of what was killed, and sold in the Shambles by the Heathens, was first offered to some of their Deities) of which, notwithstanding, (seeing an Idol was nothing) whether Men eat, were they in Reality

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the better, or whether they eat not, were they the worse. V. 8. In which Circumstance, the Apostle advises those that were strong, and mature in the Faith of Christ, and rightly instructed in the Nature of the Christian Liberty, to be very sparing in the Use of it, lest they should give Offence and Scandal to those that were weak; those other new Converts, who were, as yet, but imperfectly acquainted with the Christian Institution, and so occasion their Revolt from it again, out of Fear of committing any thing like Idolatry, (which was so enormous a Sin to the *Jews*) as they misjudged they should, if they eat of any such offered Meats, after the Example of others. Therefore he earnestly cautions those of more advanced Knowledge, though they were convinced in themselves, that there was no Harm in their so eating, that no Homage or Respect was intended thereby to those Idols, in which they did not believe; nevertheless, they ought, in Prudence, to forbear, by reason of the ill Consequence of it to others, who might, and did, by their Example, eat of those Things, even *with Conscience of the Idol*, as Things offered to an Idol; as it is affirmed in ver. 7. believing that the Idol was something, and not yet informed and satisfied but those Idols were inferior Deities; and, by so doing, their *Conscience* being weak, *i. e.* erroneous, was *defiled*; as it follows.

The Example of others, more knowing, induced them to an Imitation, and so ensnared them into the Practice of what they dissented from in their own weaker Judgments: They could not, for a great while, believe their own Condition, that they were entirely set free from the Trammels of *Jewish* Rites and Niceties, they had been so long inured to: They once were sure

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was a Duty to abstain from such Meats, and therefore, out of a mere Tenderness of Mind, they could not bring themselves, of a sudden, to approve of it; their Stomachs were too weak to digest such strong Meat, as the right Comprehension of the Christian Religion; and therefore, out of Compassion, till they were set to rights, and more fully instructed, it would be a prudent Disuse of their Liberty, for a Time, to forbear. Therefore, *Take Heed*, says St. Paul, *lest, by any Means, this Liberty of yours become a Stumbling-Block to those that are weak.* Nay, rather than a weak Brother (for whom Christ died) should perish by such a Sin, or a Defection should happen from Christianity, he concludes, in the last Verse, that *it is better not to eat Flesh while the World stands.*

From which famous Passage, (before I proceed) I would desire Leave to observe these plain Things, in relation to Liberty in Things indifferent.

1. That those Dissenters from our Church, who think there is any thing sinful in her Communion, before they can claim any Advantage from the Indulgence which St. Paul argues ought to be shewn to weak Brethren, must first if they would put themselves into the State of weak Brethren here mentioned) acknowledge, that their Conscience is erroneous, and their Judgment false, (as I am verily persuaded all those who so think) because the weak Brother, all along spoken of by the Apostle, is manifestly one who had a mistaken, erroneous Conscience; for he is defined by him, in the Entrance of the Argument, for lack of Knowledge, to eat with *Conscience of the Idols, as Things offered to an Idol,* and his Conscience, being weak, is defiled.

But 2dly, They who alledge nothing absolutely sinful against our Communion, have less Reason to insist on their Liberty in Things indifferent, (as our Ceremonies confessedly are in themselves) seeing, if they complied, they would not, by their own Confession, be guilty of Idolatry, which the weak Brethren, whom *St. Paul* favours, were brought into by their Compliance.

But farther still, if the Question be asked, When Things cease to be indifferent? It is an undeniable Truth and Answer, that they immediately cease to be such, as to our Practice and Observation, (though the same still in their own Nature) after they are established by a lawful Authority, and commanded to be observed by all under it; because the supreme Power has an undoubted Right to prescribe to our Obedience, in all Things where the Law of God does not interpose, which may tend to Peace, and Order, and Decency in Religion: And when Things come to be so, for these good Purposes, our Compliance to them becomes our Duty, and we are not at our Liberty, as before. They are, moreover, obligatory upon the Conscience, not immediately by Virtue, and innate Authority of the human Injunctions enforcing, but by Virtue of the Precept of God, which commands and requires us to be *subject to every Ordinance of Man, not only for Wrath, but for Conscience Sake*. However, neither can any say that Peace, and Charity, and Obedience are *indifferent* Things; though the Things commanded are allowed to be such.

There is another, and third Sense of Christian Liberty, which is that which my Text particularly means; that is, a Freedom from Subjection to Government, which was a false Notion that some converted *Jews* had brought into Christianity;

nity ; among whom it was a prevailing Opinion, that none ought to govern them, by their Law, but one of their own Tribes. *St. Peter*, therefore, in the Text, intends to rectify their Prejudices, which they had against his general Doctrines, laid down before, of Submission to human Ordinances, to Magistrates and Superiors of their constituting ; and so constituted, owned, and authorized by God ; and tells them, that they ought to *walk as free, not using their Liberty for a Cloak of Maliciousness*. In the Original it is not *having their Liberty*, as in the Margin of the Bible, (using being the prescribed End of having, they often pass for one another in Scripture Stile and Purpose) *a Cloak of Maliciousness, i. e. a Pretence for Sedition and Rebellion*. Under the Notion of being a free People, the *Jews* were very prone to disturb the *Roman* Governors with such unpeaceable Notions, and often did, in Fact ; and some Servants had so ignorantly mistaken the Privilege of Christianity, that their being baptized Christians, they fancied, exempted them from the Service of their Masters ; which engaged *St. Paul* to assure them of the contrary, *That all were obliged to remain in that State wherein they were called, whether bond or free ;* and that their Freedom was only in respect to God, being the Lord's Freemen, from the Dominion of Sin, whose temporal Servants soever they were.

There is, lastly, another Signification of the Christian Liberty intended in that Passage, *Rom. viii. 21. Of being delivered from the Bondage of Corruption into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God, i. e. a Freedom from Pain and Diseases, and all worldly Sufferings and Inconveniencies, when our Bodies rise again from the Grave ; the Influence of which Belief (so lately*

commemorated and confirmed) ought to be no less than what the Apostle infers in that Place, *That we should not be Debtors to the Flesh, to walk after the Flesh; but to the Spirit, to be led and governed by it, that we may live and become Sons of God, and Inheritors of the glorious Immortality which he has provided.*

Having laid before you the several Senses and Acceptations of the Word *Liberty*, as it occurs in Scripture, I shall now proceed to consider the great Reasons, why we should not always make Use of our Liberty; for what Cause it ought to be under Restraint, in Things lawful and indifferent; and how and when we are obliged to fall short, rather than exceed, in the Exercise of it: And I hope to impress the Weight of this Consideration upon you and myself, by

I. Representing the Danger of exceeding.

II. Laying down some Rules and Measures whereby we ought to conduct ourselves.

Now, how true and general is the Experience of Mankind, that the Flesh, with its Appetites, are always struggling and wishing for more Liberty; and with what Reluctance and Unwillingness is it at last subject to the Command, when mastered into Compliance by a Mind fortified with wise Considerations. Even good and serious Christians are too much inclined to allow it to the Full of what is innocent and lawful, and unwilling to deny it any Gratification in those supposed Bounds; and so, while they go to the utmost Stretch of plausible Freedom, the nicest Distinction of what is harmless and safe, they very frequently exceed the Line of their Duty, and become guilty of Sin. Such, indeed, is the Nature of Mankind, made of Flesh and Blood, that most chuse to hazard falling
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into what should not be done, rather than abridge themselves of any Thing that may be done; and the Devil is ever ready to make Use of these mistaken Notions of Liberty, therewith to deceive us to our Ruin. This is in Fact the greatest Occasion of the Irregularities and Transgressions that are in the World: And one has very truly observed upon it, "That it is in lawful Things chiefly we all of us perish." Multitudes undo themselves by Commission of little Sins, more than destroy themselves by the Guilt of notorious Crimes; and, without a particular Guard and Caution, well-disposed People will heedlessly fall into the Snare, and become obnoxious before God.

Is it not a little one, says the Sinner, *and my Soul shall live?* Notwithstanding it is certain that no Sin ought to be called little, that has any Degree of Wilfulness in it, if we consider against whom the Offence is committed, who laid down the Prohibition. *Whoever breaks one of the least Commandments* (says our Saviour) *and teaches Men so* (as any one may do by their Example, as well as Words) *shall be counted least in the Kingdom of Heaven;* and *whoever deliberately offends in one Point, is guilty of all;* and, to prevent both, we are enjoined to *abstain from all Appearance of Evil.* Why is our Hatred directed to the Garment spotted by the Flesh? But to raise our Abhorrence the higher against the sinful Lusts thereof. Why so many repeated Advices about governing our Thoughts? But because every evil Word and Deed has its Being first there, and from thence derives its Progress.

It is observed by some, that the Mystery and Signification of the Precept to *Noah*, prohibiting eating Blood, was no other than that God would have Men abstain from whatever carries a Colour or Aspect of a merciless or cruel Disposition, lest

Severity to Beasts might degenerate into Severity to Men. The Number of what are called Little Sins, may come to exceed the Weight of those that are confessedly enormous; as many small Sums added together may make a Man a great Debtor. So one of the Fathers says * “ *that Evil is very* “ great which is counted none at all, for what we “ repute no Evils, we are apt to overlook; when “ thus despised they quickly grow upon us, and “ so continue growing till they become incurable.” Honest-meaning People, who have a Regard for Virtue and Religion, and an Awe of the Fear of God upon them, and a sufficient Dread of Sin, engage in nothing, at first, but what is innocent and justifiable, and accordingly make Use of that Liberty, which they think Religion allows them, till, from one little easy Step and Degree after another, they are insensibly got to the Outside of their Liberty, and are entered the Confines of Sin, and so commit that which they never intended.

The Devil, in his Temptations, never proposes all the Matter at once which he has in View against us: That would be the Way to make us abhor the Proposal, and so defeat his own Designs: But he broaches it by Parcels and by Degrees, that which is most plausible first; and if he can over-reach our Prudence and Circumspection so far as to close, he well knows that, when we are once entered, the Transition to worse is so easy and natural, that he generally blows us up into Wickedness by that Train; and we know, that a great Fire may easily be kindled by a small Spark. *Vitia Virtutes mentiuntur*, says *Greg.*: “ Some Vices very much resemble Virtues.” And therefore *Tertullian’s* Rule is good, “ He who, in particular Circumstances, fears lawful

* *Crisostom.*

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lawful Things, will be sure to abstain from what is unlawful."

It is exceeding hazardous for any to go to the full Length of the Line of Liberty. For, in very many Cases and Circumstances, the Partition betwixt Sin and Innocence is mighty thin and easy to be broken down, and it is a hard and nice Matter to determine where one begins, and the other ends: Therefore, whoever will venture to the very Brink of the Difference, may easily, and will most probably, be enticed to transgress it by the Shortness of the Distance; and those, who do not so, are commonly judged as if they had, because they are so very near going farther; and they who wait Occasions against us will begin to count of it, and give it out as such.

Where the Mind is disposed to abate not a Tittle of its Liberty, in doubtful Instances, and is inquisitive after the utmost Bounds and Limits of what is just lawful to be done, it argues a Heart not sound in God's Statutes, not influenced by that Love of God which renders us sincere, serious, and circumspect, and intent upon pleasing, but retaining still a secret Affection for Sin, and a Love of this World more than of God. And all those nice Deliberations, and Disquisitions of Argument how far we may venture in dubious Instances, have a corrupt Principle of Sense and Self at Bottom, which would fain compound the Matter betwixt God and the World, to gain the Favour of the one, and yet lose nothing of the sensual Enjoyment of the other. All such Distinctions, in short, are to be accounted little better than Evasions and Prevarications in Duty; not how much we ought to do, but how little, will serve the Turn; not how much God and chiefly God should be loved, but how we may follow our Pleasures with Impunity; what is the lowest Measure of Virtue and Obedience

dience that can serve to keep us from the Name of bad. Such a Kind of Love this, that no body would accept of, when the Person studies by all Ways to manifest it as little as ever he can possibly: Yet no better do most of us bestow upon God Almighty, if we tamper with his Laws, and dispute to a Nicety, how much is his Due to exact, what our Privilege to refuse.

But this is not all: For, when Sin once gains Admittance through the ungrounded Entrance of indifferent Things, and the too free Use of Liberty about them, it brings on the Approbation, and insinuates itself strangely into the Affections by the bewitching Deceitfulness that is in it; and, by being suffered there a While, it passes into Habit and Delight. Thus, when one Sin is permitted quietly to creep in at our Window, it will not be long before it opens the Door, and lets in its Associates and Relations, to come to rob us of our Soul, of our Innocence, of our Happiness; and we become acquainted with them one after another: So that he who sins once, is in a fair Way of sinning often.

Such an Intruder is Sin, and the Wiles thereof, into Man's Acquaintance, that, if it has once made a Visit, it will be no longer a Stranger; it will so flatter as very soon to become familiar, in order to betray you the better, and defile you all over with Guilt and Iniquity: You know there is no handling Pitch without being defiled therewith; this then is the Danger, this the fatal Consequence of suffering Sin to encroach upon us.

And this should establish the Caution, *Touch not, taste not, handle not.* There is so great a Proclivity in the Foot-steps of Iniquity, that he who ventures upon the first Step down the Descent, though it was beyond his primary Intention to proceed to the second, third, or fourth, &c. yet the
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Case is so altered, that he finds himself more inclined to it, and less in his Choice to help it. And, though we can not so easily retreat, yet it was very easy to prevent going so far as we have done, by weighing the Consequence at first, and forbearing the Incentive that occasioned, and, in a Manner, necessitated the Rest. If we willingly assent to the first Step, we assent to all that follow; if we have no Caution as to that, it will do us little Service afterwards. Thus the angry Man, who is apt to break out into Indecencies, when his Passion is raised, has no Way to be safe and innocent, but by stopping at the first, and reflecting that he is going into one. The Beginning of this is like letting out of Water. Thus the Drunkard, who knows his own Weakness, and perhaps intends no Excess when he sits down, can neither give himself nor others any Hopes of avoiding it, but by refraining as soon as he perceives himself beginning to be elevated. When any of our Passions are set a-going to irregular Objects, and begin to get ground by our Sufferance, they will hardly be withheld till they have done that which will occasion Sorrow and Repentance.

Opportunity makes many other Sort of Sinners, as well as a Thief. To provoke Occasions, or to be surprised with a Temptation, is many Times to be half conquered by it; as, on the other Hand, to be prepared is half the Defeat, and the Obedience is so much the greater by encountering. There is wholesome Precaution in that Proverb, "He that steals an Egg, will steal an Ox." In all moral Actions, it concerns our Innocence to have a strict Eye to the Tendency of what we are about to engage in; our Caution and Recollection should be especially upon the Post, to watch the Temptations to the Sins which our Inclination favours, and

and which *do so easily beset us*, and decline that which by Consequence as well as what directly leads to it. This is a golden Rule, “to watch Beginnings and not despise little Things.” And could we duely practise the Caution in the royal perfect Law of Liberty, of avoiding *all Appearance of Evil*, we should make an Hedge about our own Virtue, and the Law of God, that neither of them be broken. To be intent upon the Observance of it, is one of the greatest Benefits, and almost the only Use of our Prudence; to be prepared against probable Accidents, and regularly decline Occasions of Sin, is a very serviceable Proof of our Wisdom: For our own Imprudence gives the Devil a greater Advantage against us than all his Power and Subtilty: Our Vigilance is to discover what leads us to Sin, and then to discover it to a good Conscience, is to avoid it. And so I proceed to some special Measures and Directions to conduct ourselves in the due Use of our Liberty, which was the second Thing proposed.

And *First*, I would lay down some Rules of Behaviour in Relation to others; next in Respect to ourselves, and the Duty we owe to God.

1. In Regard to others, we should not use our Liberty so far, in indifferent Things, as to give them any well-grounded Occasion of Offence and Scandal. For some Things, lawful in themselves, and in some Circumstances, innocent to be practised by some Persons strong in the Faith, may have the Appearance of evil, to those who are weak, and occasionally become to them an Inducement to Sin, for Want of equal Abilities to resist in Time; and so by giving such a plausible Occasion, a Man may himself partake in the Guilt of another. For that Reason it is so cautioned by Solomon, Prov. xxviii. 10. *Whoso causeth the Righteous to go astray in an evil Way, he shall himself fall into his own Pit.*

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Pit. On the contrary, *Abigail* is blessed and extolled for preventing *David* from executing his Resentment upon churlish *Nabal*, 1 *Sam.* xxv. And, rather than any should fall or miscarry by our Means, it is more adviseable to forbear in those Particulars which we know even to be safe: The Circumstance of Person, of Time, and Place, varies the Appearance of an Action, and makes a great Change in the Character of it; an indifferent Thing, by Custom, may become Evil. *Plato* wisely chid a Youth, not for doing the Thing, as he told him, but for the Custom of it. Yet it is certain, that none ought to omit what is Duty, to gratify the groundless Scruples of others: For we are not to make other Mens Conscience the Rule of our Actings, because such is the Difference of Mens Opinions, that the omitting one Thing would be a Fault in the Judgment of some People, which the contrary only would be deemed by others: The Sense of the Best and Wisest ought to govern us in this Case.

Our Innocent Saviour, we know, was represented as a *Wine-bibber*, a *Friend of Publicans and Sinners*; yet he went on uninterruptedly, still going about to do Good, and converted the Freedom of Conversation he had with the Wicked to their spiritual Advantage: So shall we sometimes be cast into the Fellowship and Company of Workers of Iniquity, which are so numerous in the World that they cannot wholly be declined. At these Opportunities, their ill Practices must never be approved or favoured by us, but rather, as the *Apostle* bids us, we should *reprove them*, * if there is a proper Time and Season, and Temper concurring to offer at a Reprehension. But if others, more scrupulous about Things unquestionably lawful, should take Exception at our Carriage, though we

* *Eph.* v. 11.

we are bound to please our Neighbour to Edification in all Things reasonable, yet we are not obliged in Charity to regard the Scruples of others unless they have some Grounds of Reason in them. Some do a great Prejudice to Christianity, and destroy the Chearfulness in themselves which it ought to inspire; by an over Timorousness they scruple to allow themselves in those Freedoms which are uncontestably innocent. What is here said does not therefore concern them in the least, any farther than to prevent their Discouragement by this Caution. They have more need of a Spur than a Rein in the Enjoyment of their Christian Liberty.

To shut up this Head; we have all the same Rules of Duty and Prudence to regulate ourselves by, and we ought never in our Observation of other Peoples Behaviour, to leave the Rule and follow the Example of Men so far, as to let the Reverence of any Man whatever cause us to sin.

I have now, in the last Place, to conclude with some Regulations of our Liberty in Relation to ourselves and our Duty to God.

And *First*, if there is any Doubt arises in our Mind about the Lawfulness of what we are doing, we must be sure to take the safest Side; as it must always be the greatest Wisdom to do in an Affair of such Moment as eternal Salvation: Wherein we can not think ourselves too safe, considering the Snare laid for us in almost every Circumstance of Life, and that we all have a great Deal of Precipitancy as well as Ignorance in our Nature, and are apt to flatter ourselves into an Opinion of the Lawfulness of that we are inclined to. We should keep up a holy Jealousy over our Actions, and always indulge our Suspicion where there is good Grounds for it. When we know there is a Snake in the

Grass,

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Grass, to walk on heedlessly and incogitantly, is to become a Prey.

The Son of *Sirach* (xxi. 2.) quickens our Circumspection, where he advises, *to flee from Sin as from the Face of a Serpent; for if thou comest too near it, it will bite thee; the Teeth thereof are as the Teeth of a Lion, slaying the Souls of Men.* If we make needless Approaches to Sin, we set our Souls at Stake, and are our own Tempters to our own Destruction. The same Son of *Sirach* says in another Place (xviii. 22.) *A wise Man will fear in every Thing; and, in the Day of sinning, he will beware of Offence; but a Fool will not observe Time.* And in another Place (iv. 20.) *Observe the Opportunity and beware of Evil; and be not ashamed when it concerneth thy Soul.*

The ancient *Nezarites*, who had taken upon them a strict Vow of never drinking any Wine, not only abstained from all Liquors that might inebriate and intoxicate them, but also from the Grape; because they feared that, from tasting the Grape, they would be tempted to drink the Wine. And can we Christians, who have the Vows of Baptism bound upon our Souls, think ourselves in any Degree of Safety, without our Guard against Sin, and studying all the prudential Ways of preventing it? If Flesh and Blood take Encouragement from the Prohibition to proceed beyond Bounds, what will they do, if countenanced and connived at by wrong Notions of Liberty.

And though it may be a Question, What are, in some Circumstances, the precise Limits of Sin and Virtue? In Matters of Meat and Drink, where Temperance ceases, and Intemperance commences? How far one may follow the Customs and Fashions of the World? In what Cases prefer to appear singular? What Recreation and Diversion use, and how often? In such as these, and Abundance

dance of other Cases like these, where the Circumstances and Degrees are left to the general Guidance of our own Discretion, without any particular Direction of Scripture about them; there can yet be no Doubt, no Difficulty at all what is best to be done, what most laudible and meet to be chosen upon such Occasions: And that is to run as few Risks and Ventures, as possible; never to strain them so far as to make them Cases and Matters of Debate, whether we have exceeded what is lawful, or not, but to keep so certainly on the Side of Virtue as not approach that Degree which has any Affinity to Sin, or Appearance of Evil in it.

Simplicius says of *Cato*, that he reckoned it as one of the Errors of his Life, that he chose to take a Voyage once by Sea to a Place he might as soon go to by Land; for so he thought it a Fault to run a needless Hazard. And if we would be safe, and prevent all Danger and Disquiet, our only Way will be to take less than can be strictly justified; and to do more, would be an indiscreet Use of our Liberty, and involve us in a Hazard and Perplexity. Whenever, therefore, we begin to doubt within ourselves whether we have not gone far enough, then, then is the Time to stop short and forbear going the least Step beyond it.

St. Paul gives a Rule to clear up all those Doubts, in that Maxim of his own Conduct: *All Things are lawful for me, but all Things are not expedient.* If we apply this to our Words and Actions, every Body can resolve, at first Sight, what is best and most expedient, what will promote most the Honour of God and Religion, what will edify our Neighbour best, and what advance ourselves in Virtue highest.

The Remainder of the Verse of our Text gives a Reason for the Restriction upon our Liberty,

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ay, viz. as being the Servants of God: Now it is required of Servants, that they be continually careful to promote their Master's Interest, and do his Pleasure, and when once they know what is most acceptable to him, in the Sphere they are in, and the Course of their Service, not stay to be bid do every Particular of their Duty, nor excuse their Neglect by pretending they did not know what was most agreeable to his Will in such or such Instances. Keeping that Rule in our Eye, *whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, do all to the Glory of God*, we shall eat and drink in the best Measure, and do every Thing we do in the best Manner, and so sanctify indifferent Things.

So again in Duties expressly required, whereof the Measure and Circumstances are left to the general Rule of Reason and Prudence; as, how often we should pray, how much Alms give to the Poor: To fulfil those and the like Precepts which are enjoined us, there is no other Way to be safe and satisfied, but to do rather more than less; and Reason will suggest to us what Measure and Degree will consist with our other Affairs of Business, and Circumstances of Fortune, and accordingly, what will be best pleasing to God, and farther most his Glory and our own Salvation.

So that the chief Cautions of our Liberty should in Prudence be restrained to sum themselves up for our Remembrance into these two.

1. In Things that are permitted us, to fall short, rather than exceed; to take too little of the Pleasures and Refreshments which Reason and Religion allow us, rather than too much.

2. On the other Hand, in Duties commanded, there it is our Circumspection and best Counsel to exceed, rather than come short; lest we also come short of the Glory of God, by not promoting it enough by the Manifestations of our Love, and

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not

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not keeping to the Design of Christianity, which is to make us as good and holy as we can be.

These two Rules kept in Mind, and faithfully applied upon Occasion, will solve every Doubt better than all the Wisdom and Distinctions of the Schoolmen and Casuists: These Rules will prevent coming to Doubts, by teaching us never to venture too far on the one Hand, nor be too remiss on the other; and I am sure, that is greater Wisdom, than to run into Doubts first about the Lawfulness of this or that Action, and then, by the Help of Extenuations and Distinctions, to endeavour to solve them.

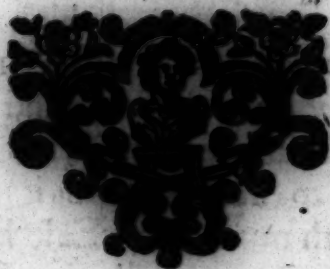
But lastly, to keep ourselves still safer, we ought as much as possible to abstain from first Beginnings, Occasions and Approaches to Sin. "The full Accomplishment, says one, and final Consummation of Wickedness, we have all a natural Horror of, and when that is the Thing proposed to us (as whether we shall commit Murder or Adultery, &c.) we easily reject the Temptation, and can hardly suppose it possible that we should be guilty of such heinous Offences. But here is our Misfortune; we have not the same Dread on us of the first Beginnings and Tendencies towards those grosser Crimes. So then we are easily prevailed with to begin, and when we have once made an Entrance the Progress is easy, and grows easier and easier; like a Motion down Hill, such is the Proneness and Proclivity of human Nature to Evil; which Motion was no Labour to stop at the Brink of the Hill, but now becomes a Labour and Pain very difficult to surmount. For, as I said, the next Degree to the First being but one Degree beyond that, carries as little Horror in it as the First, and so the next to that, being but a Degree farther, carries the like Appearance, and so the Rest that follow; we measuring every Degree

Degree not as we should do by all the preceding ones, which it presupposes and contains, but only by the last which it immediately exceeds, considering it only as a Degree farther than that, and so a small Thing, 'till by Degrees we slide in unawares into the Commission of those Sins which look frightful, and would have choaked us in the Lump; but, being thus gradually and minutely chewed and taken Peice-meal, are easily swallowed."

And there is still a greater Occasion for this heedful Circumspection, from the depraved Inclination and Tendency of our Nature, and from the frequent Miscarriage of others in such Trials; because the first Liberties that we take, the first Beginnings that we indulge, and first Approaches that we make to any Sin (especially those wherein the Lusts of the Flesh are concerned) do very much inflame our Passions, and particularly the Sin of our Constitution, which is ready to take the least Hint of Connivance, raise our Appetites which lay quiet before, and encrease our Desires of the forbidden Object; so that now it becomes harder to abstain than it was at first, and we might with much more Ease have forborne the Whole, Beginning and all, than forbear making a farther Progress after we have once begun.

And as Innocence is much preferable to Pardon upon our Repentance, both upon Account of the Clearness of our Condition, and the Satisfaction of our own Mind; so Prevention is our Innocence and best Safety; that is and must be the Wisdom and Understanding of frail Creatures like us. So shall we happily eschew those Things, without all Question, which are contrary to the Decorum of our Profession, and the Fellowship that we have with Christ's holy and pure Religion; so shall we effectually abstain from those fleshly Lusts which war against the Soul, as the *Apostle* forewarns

us a little before the Text; and, by an unblemished Conversation, take off Occasion from those who seek Occasion to speak Evil of us. So shall we enjoy all the Liberty that is wise and safe, and put our Prudence and Discretion to the right Use they were given us for, which was to guide us safely through Things temporal till at last we arrive to Things eternal.





Fourth Sunday after *Easter*.

S E R M O N

The Sixteenth.

*The Sinfulness and Mischief of Anger,
and how to avoid it.*

JAMES I. Conclusion of the 19th Verse, and
Part of this Day's Epistle.

Slow to Wrath.

WRATH and Anger are some of the specified *Works of the Flesh*, which St. Paul exhorts the *Galatians* to wean themselves from ; all of which, in general, we have obliged ourselves, by his Advice, to *mortify* into due Subjection, in Memory especially of our Saviour's Resurrection, lately by us remembered, and in Assurance of our own: And we shall do well to regulate this mischievous one, and give ourselves up wholly (as we ought) to be led and governed by that blessed Spirit, whose *Fruit is Meekness, Gentleness, Peace*, who is desirous (if we are but so wise and willing) to have the Conduct over Men who believe the Resurrection of the Dead,

and a future State, to guide us through this temporal Stage with that *Wisdom from above*, which is *first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated*: A Wisdom which runs through the Body of the Christian Religion, and vitally inspires it with a Spirit of Meekness and Patience; which teaches us both how to prevent Offences, and how to forgive Injuries.

Anger is likewise a considerable large Instance, whereon to apply the Moderation of our Christian Liberty; so that you perceive I have taken up this Admonition of St. James, of *being slow to Wrath*, that I might urge it upon ourselves by the most seasonable Improvement of such a Duty.

The Duty here before us, is *to be slow to Wrath*, i. e. to be seldom angry, and never but upon just and great Reasons, and weighty Causes moving thereunto. The Sin, and Breach of this Duty, is when Men are angry for Trifles, soon enraged, for little or no Cause, or when they are immoderately angry on a good Occasion, or when they retain the Resolution too long upon any.

That the Passion of Anger simply, in itself considered, is not sinful, is plainly implied by this very Expression; for if it was, the Apostle would not, as in another Place, bid us *be slow to it*, but avoid it as fast as we can possibly; nor would St. Paul countenance it so far as to bid us *be angry, but sin not*, which clearly supposes, and declares, that a Christian may be angry without Sin: And, that the Passion of Anger may sometimes be innocent, the Example of our Saviour makes it still clearer; of whose holy Anger against the Pharisees, and whose Indignation at the Dishonour done to his Father's House, we read in the Gospel, *Mark iii. 5.* and we may be as sure he did no Sin,

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It is by no means the Intention of his Religion to extirpate our Passions, but to govern, regulate, and conduct them to their proper Ends, and make them subservient to the good and needful Purposes they were given us of God for: As this, in particular, of Anger was, by his wise Providence, cast into our Frame and Constitution, that we may be concerned more or less for Things, in proportion as they deserve our Concern. What calls for the Resentment of our Zeal, in the first Place, as what is in Dignity supreme, is the Honour due unto God's holy Name, his Word, and Worship; yea, to be very zealous with a fervent Concern (as was *Elijah*) for his Interest and Service; and so was *Moses exceeding angry* and incensed at the *Israelites*, for making a molten Calf; and to be vexed with righteous *Lot* at the Impieties and Impurities of Men, and endeavour all we can in our Sphere to amend them: On such Occasions it would be a Sin in us not to be angry.

Besides, the Appearance of Anger, either real or feigned, in the Governments and Subordinations of the World, is a very useful Instrument and Assistant in the Hands of those who are in Authority, to restrain such as are under them, whether Subjects, Scholars, Children, or Servants; such as will be subject only for Fear, and for Wrath's Sake. The Vindication of an abused Friend will justify some Wrath, and so will a Concern for the publick Good, in Cases of apparent Hazard, or probable Danger: And it may sometimes also be beneficially turned upon ourselves, to raise a contrite Abhorrence in our Breast against our own Follies and Iniquities, that we commit them no more. On these, and such like Occasions, it is not only innocent, but commendable, and our Duty to employ our Anger.

And thus far having premised the Lawfulness, and Use of Anger in general, the Business from these Words, in Connection to what I have said before, will be,

I. To enquire when our Anger becomes sinful; and then we may, with greater Certainty,

II^{dly}, Observe how contrary it is to the Temper of our Religion; how mischievous and inconvenient also in its Effects and Consequences in other Respects; and, in the

III^d, and last Place, when persuaded of this, I would recommend a few Directions how to prevent and avoid the same.

Our first Enquiry is when Anger becomes sinful: To do Satisfaction to which Question, I answer, it is so,

1st. When precipitate and hasty; for that runs directly counter to the Direction of the Text, of being slow to Resentment, and incurs, moreover, the Censure of the wise Man in two * Places of his Proverbs: *He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly, and he that is hasty in Spirit exalteth Folly; as he that is slow to Wrath, on the other Hand, is of great Understanding.* How can he well be innocent who takes Fire presently, and suffers himself to flame into enormous Rage, before he has given himself Time to consider, whether the Object or Occasion deserved it; and so puts out his Reason in an Instant, that it is past considering afterwards? Some Constitutions, it is true, are naturally more warm and cholerick, and by so much more susceptible of resentful Emotions than others; but then it is the Province of Reason to command the Peace within, and to correct this reigning

* Prov. xiv. 17. 29.

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III-Tendency of Complexion to Evil where it is, (to every one there is some peculiar Sin, that *easily besets them*, and is more difficult than others to be mastered) and by neglecting to strive against it at first, by Indulgence, it at last becomes an Infirmity and Feebleness of Mind, unable to bear a Contradiction, and so degenerates into Peevishness and Moroseness, by the Person's own Default, in not governing himself in Time, which, as it is very disagreeable to others, is seldom pitied by any; save only when great Age, or Pain, or Infirmities of Body, seem to apologize for it. But, as the Impression may be received too soon, so it may,

2dly, be retained too long, and render it yet more guilty. If continued in too long, it will degenerate into Sin; the longest Period of its Innocence is before the *Sun sets*; for that is charged upon our Care and Watchfulness, never to be suffered to * *go down upon our Wrath*; that so we may be in a good Condition to say our Prayers, and receive Pardon of God for our own daily Faults; and, whenever we presume to lift up our Hands in Prayer, it must be (as the Apostle directs) *without Wrath*: When it lies longer on the Spirit, it is apt to broil into Hatred, and foment into Malice, and so grow sullen and inflexible, or cunning and concealed, and either Way implacable and revengeful.

Such was the devilish Temper the Historian describes of *Domitian*. *Præceptis in Iram, & quo obscurior, eo irrevocabilius. Tacit.* The more obscure and concealed his Anger was, it was the more unappeasable. *Ira quæ tegitur nocet, professa perdunt odia vindictæ locum.* But any of these, with us Christians, we know to be a Deviation from the Duty of Charity, the Spirit of our

* Eph. iv. 26.

our Religion ; and the Devil is ever watchful of all Advantages, which the Excesses of our Passions give him over us ; and this Exceeding in the Continuance of our Anger, he improves into subsequent Sins of the most enormous Kind, and partaking most of his own Nature ; so that if we would not *give Place*, or Opportunity to the Devil, (as we are strictly cautioned) * we must *cease from Anger*, and check it in Time. A transient Anger may arise, and be seen a little warm and vehement, sometimes, in good and wise Men ; but it *rests* only, and abides in the *Bosom of Fools*, in the Determination of *Solomon*. They can neither be wise nor religious, who suffer themselves to be held fast in that Snare of the Devil, by nourishing up, and persevering in their angry Disgust many Sun-sets.

There is a third, and very usual Fault, when it exceeds in respect of the Occasion. The justifying ones, I said before, are the Glory of God, the publick Good, the Defence of Innocence, or some Matter of Moment, wherein we ourselves are interested : However, it ought at no Time to swell to that Degree, as to disorder any one's Reason, or discompose and unfit for the Discharge of such Offices as are due to God, our Neighbour, and ourselves. But to fret and fume for little Matters, or mere Impertinencies, is a very absurd, and a very ridiculous Emotion ; as when one is incensed at, and falls out with himself at every Cross, at Events purely contingent ; at brute Creatures, which design us no Vexation, or at inanimate ones, which cannot possibly intend us any Harm. When we are ruffled, and disquieted at the Ignorance, or Mistakes of other People, because they do not agree in the same Opinion with us, because they do not, perchance,

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* Eph. iv. 27.

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pay us Respect enough, or because our own Pride or Jealousy have hastily interpreted that to be a Slight, or an Injury done us, which no-body designed as such; none of which Occasions should throw a wise Man out of his Temper in the least, who, for that Purpose, ought to carry his Reason about him, and remember that it was given him to conduct himself so as not to be disturbed at what cannot be helped; to overlook what does not deserve his Notice, and to make Allowances for the Failings of his Fellow Creatures.

Nor is there, in the next Place, any Foundation for Anger, when Men are out of Humour at the Advices of a faithful Friend, or at the Admonitions and Reprehensions of their Teacher, which proceeded, and are addressed to them, merely in and through Good-will, and Kindness, and Conscience of Duty, and of the Truth: All, and each of these, are no Motives at all; but, on the contrary, are causeless Beginnings of Displeasure; and the Anger thence arising is unbecoming, intemperate, and sinful; ever ending, moreover, in Sin, according to the Degree of the Passion, and the Consequences which follow.

Shall I, lastly, just speak of other Cases, when Anger is sinful in us? Every body will condemn it, when it issues (as very commonly it does) from Pride or Self-Love: So *Solomon* deduces, and condemns it under the Character of *Proud Wrath, the Fomenter of fierce Contentions and Disputes*. Nor is it to be excused, if it springs out of Curiosity; as, not seldom, for the Gratification of this Humour, People seek, and, by seeking, easily find Occasions and Provocatives for it.

Having seen so many Ways how Anger becomes culpable; as when it proceeds from a bad Principle, a trivial Cause or Object; if it exceeds

ceeds Bounds, upon whatever Occasion ; if it continues too long, or if it kindles too soon. Let us, in the

Ill Place, survey the farther Guilt and Turpitude of it, by observing (as was proposed) how contrary it is to the Temper of our Religion ; how mischievous and inconvenient, moreover, the Effects and Consequences of it are in other Respects.

And it must needs be as contrary to it, as it is to Meekness itself, which is a Frame and Disposition of Spirit, so strictly and variously enjoined by the Precepts of our Christianity, so forcibly recommended by the instructive Example of the blessed Author of it, the Son of God most High, who was the Son of Man most humble and meek, who began his very first Sermon with a Blessing on the Meek ; *Blessed are the Meek, for they shall inherit the Earth* : As they verily, in the Constitution of Things, are more qualified to enjoy their Portion of it (be it never so small) with a placid, easy Disposition, and therefore much more enjoy it than they who have the largest Shares or Dominions without the other.

In the same divine Sermon on the Mount he assures, that * *whoever is angry with his Brother without Cause, is in Danger of the Judgment*. Nay, the Word in the Original, which answers to *without Cause*, is left out in some of the best Copies, which renders the Duty still more strict ; and whoever lets his Anger and Resentment transport so far as the ill Language of *Raca*, or *Fool*, or worse Words, *shall be in Danger of Hell-Fire*, i. e. suffer a great Degree of Punishment. *Revilers*, accordingly, are, by one of his † Apostles, reckoned up expressly in the Catalogue of those who shall be excluded the Kingdom of Heaven ; and

* Mat. v. 22.

† Cor. vi. 10.

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and whoever intends a Sacrifice of Prayer and Thanksgiving to the Almighty, as he expects to have it accepted, must *first go and be reconciled to his Brother, and then, and not before, come and offer his Gift.*

And how instantly did he correct the swelling, ill-designing Rage of two of his Disciples against the inhospitable Treatment of the Samaritans, in that divine Reprimand, *Ye know not what Manner of Spirit ye are of?* for he had before instructed them, that all revengeful and injurious Thoughts against our Brother was the Sin of Murder.

And not only the Precept, but the Exemplar of his own quiet and submissive Deportment under Sufferings, explains and obliges us farther to infer, that the greatest Injuries and Reproaches will not justify the Anger of Ill-Will, nor should provoke to any thing else but our blessing and praying for those who *despitefully use and curse us*: That we must calmly pardon those who have offended us, as we ourselves request and expect any Forgiveness from God's Hands. Such are the Prohibitions and Anger-assuaging Counsels; such the Pattern of the mild *Jesus*. All those boisterous Passions, and tenacious Resentments of Men, who pretend to embrace his Religion, are, therefore, in Reality, an open and manifest Defiance to that Duty, which they are indispensably enjoined.

How much Pains also do the Apostles take to inculcate the same Lesson under the Necessity of its Practice, lest we should forget it? They entreat and beseech us, that ** all Anger, and Bitterness, and Wrath, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking be put away from us*: They give us the Character of *† Heavenly Wisdom, as peaceable and meek, and easy to be entreated*; and *whoever is this kind of wise Man, let him shew out of a good and inoffensive*

* Eph. iv. 1, &c.

† James iii. 13.

five Conversation *his Works with Meekness* *, that our Moderation be known unto all Men: And they again invite us with the Charms of a meek and quiet Spirit, which is a great Ornament amongst Men, and, in the Sight of God, of great Price.

Besides what I mentioned in the Beginning, of Anger's being, by Name, a Work of the Flesh, our Apostle gives this general Reason of embracing the one, and restraining from the other, of being slow to Wrath, because, as it follows in the Words next after the Text, *the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God*: So Solomon before him gave Abundance of like Reasons, † as, that *the angry Man stirreth up Strife, and the furious Man aboundeth in Transgressions*; and || *seest thou a Man hasty in his Words, there is more Hopes of a Fool than of him*; and § *he that has no Rule over his Spirit, is like a City broken down, and without Walls*. From these, and many other Places, it appears plainly how repugnant is the common Custom of indulging Anger to the Tenour of the Christian Religion, and the numerous Precepts of the Scripture, by which we ought to govern ourselves.

But it will yet be found more wicked and pernicious still, if we go on to trace it in its Effects and Consequences, which next succeed in Order: They are so many, that I must be content to enumerate but a few of them.

It was hinted before, as a very accusing Article of Guilt, how much the allowing ourselves in Wrath, that is, not endeavouring to assuage the Emotion, and remove the Impression, incapacitates us for our Devotion; for the regular Performance of any Duty to God, our Neighbour, or ourselves;

* Phil. iv. 5.
§ Ibid. xxv. 28.

† Prov. xxix. 22.

|| Ibid. 20.

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ourselves; and how infallibly it subjects us to the dreadful Wrath of God, while we continue in ours without Repentance and Amendment.

What tragical Effects of Violences and Murders, what brutish and inhuman Actions do Histories, sacred and prophane, acquaint us to have proceeded from this Passion ungoverned? That the worst that are recorded have generally issued from this Source, it would be easy to produce Instances, did I suspect this needed any Proof; rather your own Reading, or Observation, will furnish but too many Particulars of Quarrels, of revealing Secrets, of Oaths and Curses, and forest Mischiefs from hence arising. I will only put you in mind of two in Holy Writ.

Simeon and Levi, in their Anger, slew a Man, and massacred a whole Village; and how great was the Indignation of the holy Patriarch against the barbarous Deed! *In their Anger* (said he) *they slew a Man.* O, my Soul, come not thou into their Secrets! *curst be their Anger, for it was fierce; and their Wrath, for it was cruel;* as you may read in the 49th Chapter of *Genesis*. The other is of holy *David*, who was enraged to that Pitch at the sullen, ungrateful Treatment of the brutish *Nabal*, that he resolved on a desperate Execution, and utter Extirpation, had not *Abigail* happily interposed; for which, when he came to himself, and to his Reason, he blessed the Lord God for sending her, in Time, to prevent so great an Evil to himself as well as *Nabal*, as you find it written in *1 Samuel xxv*. How was the rough, incensed *Esau* also appeased by the gentle, engaging Methods of *Jacob*, which, like a Conqueror, whilst he was but a Suppliant, disarmed the other of all his injurious Intentions?

There is, in short, no Mischief, or Injustice, which a Man is not prepared to commit, and
which

which he may not possibly perpetrate, (though he abhors it never so much in cool Thoughts) if he once surrenders himself up to the giddy, impetuous Counsels of this transporting Passion, ready to hurry him to act its wicked Satisfaction, *as a Horse rushest into Battle.* Such fatal Risks are likely to overtake us, when unbridled Passion has got the Reins: As a Ship, in a high raging Storm, drives on Sands or Rocks, when it has lost its Pilot in the Course; so when this furious, transporting Storm of the Mind, for want of timely Check, has blinded the Reason, and drowned the Pilot in the Torrent; nothing reasonable, nothing becoming a Man, can be expected from his Actions, no more than, by Chance, from a Madman; and there is no other Difference betwixt this last, and a passionate Man, but that the first has lost his Understanding for good and all, the other for a Space of Time, by Fits. How unjustly does it take Vengeance out of the Hands of God, and of the Magistrate, to execute it itself, with a Sort of Happiness and Satisfaction contrary to all other Happiness whatsoever? Nor has it any other Measure or Standard of Right or Wrong, but the present Resentment, which observes no Measure but the Gratification of itself: It is sure to cause the Man to mistake, or oversee what he would not at another Time; he will now bear no Opposition, though never so reasonable; you had as good dissuade the Winds of the Seas; not the justest Excuse will appease, nor the clearest Vindication be heard; but the frantick Dictates of Passion intense are the only Things listened to, till the unhappy Madman has committed that which he will repent all his Lifetime after, and perhaps can scarce ever make Satisfaction for: So void of all Sense is it when it has got into its Altitudes, that it will be offended

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at every thing it its Way. Whether it is Aggressor or Defendant, in any Difference, it will be both Party and Judge, and how much Justice is to be expected you may easily determine.

It has risen to that monstrous Extravagance in some as to challenge God Almighty, as we are informed one of the * *Roman* Emperors did, for disturbing him with Thunder; which only confirms how capable the Excess of it is totally to deprive a Man of all Use of his Understanding. "Neither can it be expected, when Passion has subdued Reason, and the Enemy is received into our Gates, that the Conqueror will take Conditions of the Prisoner."

But the passionate, impatient Man brings various other Evils upon himself, greater than those he meditates for his hated Adversary. As soon as small Provocations have irritated him much, his Countenance is disfigured and altered, in some paler, in others redder; the Tongue stammers, the Speech is precipitate, remarkable for Loudness, and commonly for foul Language, and bitter Words; the Teeth gnash, the Mouth foams, the Eyes are fiery, and the Posture frantick: A Spectacle disagreeable enough to put exorbitant Passion out of Countenance, and prevent it, did it but behold itself confronted with Order and Decency.

Besides, immoderate Agitation of Mind is observed to hinder Perspiration and Digestion, and to be more hurtful than immoderate Motion of the Body. What Injuries does a Man's Health receive, who is retentive of Spleen? The Tranquility of his Mind is broken, which renders him neither acceptable to himself nor others; and the haughty, angry one, is both despised, and destitute of Counsel, and the Benefit of Friendship:

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For

• Caligula.

For the wise Preacher advises, *Prov. xxii. 24. Not to make Friendship with an angry Man, and with a furious Man not to walk*; and, and if ever he hears the Truth, it must be from an Enemy in Disdain, or from one who resolves to forfeit his good Opinion by telling it.

What Advantages, moreover, does he give every body over him? *It is ever, as one said, two to one against the angry Man*; his own Servant becomes his Master, as often as he is immoderately angry at him for an Offence; and how much Passion raises and agitates Disputes, to the Disquiet of the World, the Loss of Charity, and often the Obscurity of the Truth in question, is too well known not to be lamented. It is to this our Apostle has a particular Eye, in this Piece of Caution, as may be collected from the Context. Angry Words strike the Impression of fresh, and more of their own kind, just as mutually as soft, gentle Words beget their like, as it were, by way of musical Note. It is in angry Words as in Blows, the second begins the Battle, and is most in Fault; and, when the Passions are unchained on both Sides, they meet and encounter like fierce Beasts; and it is to be wished we had never yet heard the foul, unchristian Language given on those Occasions, though the most enraged generally comes off with the worst, as well as he forfeits his Discretion by being so soon provoked; for Solomon tells him, ** The Discretion of a Man deferreth his Anger, and it is his Glory to pass over a Transgression.* Whoso rageth and is confident, what is his Name? Solomon tells you, *his Name is Fool; he is swift to speak, slow to hear*, though St. James requires the contrary.

Which brings me, in the last Place, to endeavour the Government of that Passion, by offer-

* Prov. xxix. 11.

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ing some Considerations and Directions to that Purpose.

And the first shall be the Wisdom and Reputation of governing our Passion: In the Comparison of the wisest Man, *Prov. xvi. 37. He that is slow to Anger is better than the Mighty, and he that ruleth his Spirit, than he that taketh a City. Latius regnet Spiritum domando*: "He is a greater Emperor who keeps all his Passions in the Bounds of due Subjection, than he who sits on the Throne over Millions," and is a Slave to the other domestick Tyrants: For he that can, at Pleasure, command in his own Resentments, can govern, and get the Ascendant over all those who cannot: And it is the greatest worldly Wisdom to bear, and disappoint the Follies and Extravagancies of Men in a sedate, dispassionate Manner; for, by our not supporting them so, we make them our own. How much does Mildness and placid Meekness endear and sweeten us, even to our Enemies, (if any can be long an Enemy to one of this engaging Temper.) *Soft Words* are famous for *turning away Wrath, and breaking the Bone of Contention*; and what Advantages do we reap from a composed Temper, and an unaffected Humility in this World? They are most preferring and recommending Virtues, they infuse the like into their Neighbours, insinuating, like Oil, into Men's Affections: They make us, in this respect, well-pleasing to God; give Health and good Complexion to the Body; Peace and Liberty, Tranquility and sound Judgment to the Mind of him who possesses them, and prevents the innumerable Mischiefs, Follies, and Inconveniencies, the Troubles and Remorses, which are the daily Offspring of ungoverned Anger.

2dly, Considering that Repentance generally there begins where irregular Anger ends, the best

Expedient and Preservative we can have Recourse to, is that of Prevention in Time. The Beginning is like letting out Water; none can say where it will stop, nor what Offences and Indecencies he may be carried to. The meek *Moses*, in a Passion, *spoke unadvisedly with his Lips*; for which he was, by God, excluded Entrance into the promised Land of *Canaan*. It is infinitely easier to repel and mitigate it, at its first Risings, than subdue it when advanced to a Head; like as a Stream, at the first breaking out, is soon stopped; a Spark of Fire, which may be the Beginning of great Combustion and Destruction, is presently extinguished, while it is kindling; and a Mob is much easier dispersed at first gathering than afterwards. Indeed the Fury and Outrage of this Passion may be compared to any ungovernable Thing, if any would suffice to awaken our Care of guarding against it: It ought to be curbed in straitly with Bit and Bridle, lest it fall on other People, or hurt ourselves; and every body should have some cooling Arguments and Considerations ready to suppress it, as they would Water and Buckets to extinguish a Fire.

One of the first prudent Reflections to suppress and compose our Passion, is to consider *that we are going into one*: Now is the Time for Reason to be heard, for when the Storm is once up, its still Voice will be heard no more: Another Reflection may step in also, whether the offending Party did not design to make us angry, and why should we pleasure an Enemy so far? Like a wise Man of old, who had received an Indignity for that Purpose, and he that offered it, said, "Sure this Affront will make him angry." "No," said the other; but I *was considering*, whether I ought to be so or not." In refraining this Passion, the best Remedy, certainly, is to gain Time; a Day,

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Day, an Hour, nay, a few Minutes gained by any, in those violent Cases, is generally sufficient to persuade ourselves, that the Opportunity for Revenge is not yet come; by which Means, probably, it never will. I have heard of a prudent Husband, who used always to tell his provoking Wife, that he had a great Mind to be angry with her To-morrow; in the mean Time he kept his Temper, and there was, by that pretty Adjournment, constantly one Day betwixt him and his Anger.

If we can but prevail with ourselves to defer the Resentment to another Time, the Conquest is gained, the Fervour abates, and the Mist that was gathering about the Mind disperses; and then all possible Allowances to the Person, and Mitigations of the Offence, will be taken into Consideration; and they would always be so, if we would resolve first, before we take any thing ill of another, to make his Case our own, as all the Reason in the World requires we should; and, when we have thus turned the Tables, and still find a just and reasonable Cause of Anger, (which it is but very seldom we do) when Reason thus raises the Passion to a little Height, what it raises itself it can soon compose by reasonable and religious Methods, by the Duty of Patience, or by legal, proper Redress, if it is too injurious to be borne.

3dly, The most effectual Prevention is to avoid all Occasions that used to provoke to Passion; as those who are apt to be provoked by Gaming, or by Disputes in Company, or by any other Thing, to shun them as much as possible. *Socrates*, as wise a Man as he was, durst not trust himself with so potent a Passion; for he was a very passionate Man by Nature, and his Wisdom consisted in avoiding the Occasions of it what he could; and

whenever he happened to be angry, resolving never to execute what his Passion prompted him to, not so much as the beating of a Servant.

We must also, if we would kill it in the Root, augment the Strength and Liberty of our Mind, and divest ourselves of Pride and irregular Self-Love. *Solomon* has told us, *only by Pride come Contentions, and fierce Brauls.* If People would therefore think more soberly of themselves, and more highly of their Neighbours, most of the Heart-Burnings in the World would cease, and Peace and Good-Humour, Love and Tenderness, Meekness and mutual Respect, would succeed in the Room, which will make Society and Neighbourhood happy, and Conversation easy and delectable.

Through too much Credulity, that is, believing every little Story they hear, Men often involve themselves in groundless Disquiet, which ought therefore to be declined by us, as an Enemy to our Peace, and a Fomenter of groundless Disturbances.

So ought Luxury, which is said to be a Nourisher of the same Passion: When any of our Horses grow too fierce, the Way to take down their Mettle is to feed them accordingly.

So ought Curiosity, which makes us eager and inquisitive into Matters, which we had much better live in Ignorance of; and, when known and discovered, help us to much needless Vexation, which we shall be very unwise if we go a hunting after. Thus *Cæsar*, wise, and generous, and forgiving, when Letters, and several Papers of Consequence, which discovered who were his Enemies, fell into his Hands, he magnanimously burned them, without ever examining the Contents.

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If ye know of any other exciting Cause, or Occasion of Wrath, I entreat every one to discard it also, that so we may all fulfil the Duty of the Text, of *being slow to Wrath*, and avoid so much Guilt and Inconvenience as has been represented: And, if any one lack this Wisdom to govern his Passions, let him be advised by the Apostle, in this Day's Epistle, and ask it, as he directs, of God, from whom every good and perfect Gift comes.

And if we want a patient Steadiness, and a uniform Firmness and Discretion upon all Occasions, of whom should we seek it but of him, with whom is no Variableness, nor Shadow of Turning? In short, if a Man would pray for a universal Conduct over his Passions, I can advise him to no better Form than that before the Epistle of this Day.

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly Wills and Affections of sinful Men, grant unto me, and all thy People, that we may love the Thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold Changes of the World, our Hearts may surely there be fixed, where true Joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord.



U 4

S E R.

THE SERMONS OF

Fifth Sunday after *Easter*.

S E R M O N

The Seventeenth.

Christ's Ascension and Kingdom.

JOH. xvi. 28. Being a Portion of the Gospel
of the Day.

*I came forth from the Father, and am come into
the World: Again, I leave the World to go to the
Father.*

OUR blessed Lord and Saviour's Ascension, and Return again to his Father, being the closing Scene, and the final Accomplishment of the ever-wonderful Dispensation of our Redemption, and the no less sure Confirmation of our Faith and Hope in the Mercies and the Merits thereof, is without Apology a principling Truth of prime Importance and Edification, both to our Belief and Practice, deserving to employ our Thoughts in the right Understanding, and the due Influences of this Article of our Creed. It is the more seasonable so to do now in a serious and proper Bent of Mind,

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as we next Week commemorate the glorious Ascension of our Lord. And, for the better Order of our Meditation hereon, I will dispose my Discourse into these three Particulars.

- I. That we may consider some of the Circumstances of it.
- II. The Ends and Benefits.
- III. Draw some useful Inferences for the Bettering our Lives.

And, first, as to the Circumstances, it is to be noted, that our Lord Christ ascended not into Heaven, or returned to his Father, neither indeed could he, in respect to his divine Nature; because that is incapable of any local Motion either of Ascend or Descent: For what Place is there which the Divine Essence does not already fill, and is not always present in? That Essence in which he is God, and one God with the Father, is necessarily every where, and the Immensity thereof can be shut out of no imaginable Place: All Things, and Places of Things, throughout the vast Expanse of the Creation, subsist in him and by him, and are in his Hands continually: Whatever *lives, moves, and has a Being*, lives, moves, and exists according to his Will and Pleasure. Our Saviour says of himself, while here on Earth in the Station of the Son of Man, that he was at the same Time in Heaven, Joh. iii. 13. *And no Man hath ascended up to Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man who is in Heaven.* And therefore when it is said, here in my Text, that *he came into the World and from his Father*, with many such like Expressions in other Places, they are all to be understood of the several Manifestations of the Divinity for the Good and Benefit of Men, according to human Capacity. The invisible

invisible Deity became visible in the *Tabernacle of Flesh*, in which *he dwelt amongst us*; and, when he had fulfilled the Ministry of that his gracious Condescension, in that human Nature with which he clothed himself from the Virgin's Womb, he ascended visibly into Heaven, there perpetually to reign in the Glories of God's right Hand, till he appears again the second Time to judge the World, in like Circumstances of Glory and of Angels, on Clouds and Brightness, which accompanied his Departure hence. His divine Person, says an eminent Divine, * "was not lessened in *itself* by his Humiliation, nor was it augmented in *itself* by his Exaltation; and yet it was really humbled and really exalted: His human Nature is not only the true and proper Subject of his Exaltation, but is withal the *Subiectum Inhabitionis*, the Subject of Residence; his Exaltation in it, or according to it, includes a true and real Change in itself, not only in respect of us, or of the Titles which we attribute or ascribe to it: His human Nature, in his Humiliation, was *cloathed with Mortality*, as with its inner Garment, and had the *Form of a Servant* as an outward Vesture upon it: In his Exaltation, he put off both, and clothed the human Nature with his Immortality, and covered and adorned his immortal Nature with the Robes of endless Glory and Majesty: This Alteration and internal Change all do grant."

And, as the Scripture is very particular and express in representing our Lord's Departure in the only Capacity by which he could leave us and ascend into Heaven, by his being *taken, carried, lifted up, gone into Heaven, parting from his Disciples, leaving the World, and going to the Father*; that we have him not always with us; that we be-

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ing in the Body are absent from him; and who shall ascend into Heaven to bring Christ down thence; and that the Heavens must receive, or hold him till the Restitution of all Things: From these and many other Passages, and from others the strongest Reasons, it is demonstrably certain, that Christ is not corporally present upon Earth, but that his human Nature is resident at the right Hand in Heaven, exclusive of other Places. It were easy to infer from hence the palpable Absurdity of the absurdest on all the *Romish* Tenets, I mean their Transubstantiation, which maintains, that Christ's Body is in Heaven and on Earth at the same Time, nay in a Million of different and far distant Places on Earth at the same Instant; than which nothing can be invented more repugnant to Scripture, nor more grossly contradictory to Sense and Reason.

It pretends not to the least Shadow of Evidence from holy Writ, but the metaphorical Expression of our Lord, who in the very next Breath to the Words of Consecration, calls the Element still by the Name of *Bread*, after he had consecrated it; than which Explanation of himself what could shew clearer that he meant not the other in the literal Sense? Besides, all the Reason of human Mind, as well as our Senses, does utterly disclaim and entirely contradict it; for, by all the Conceptions that we can frame of Body and material Substance, this is the plainest, and certainest, and most essential Account we can have of it, that it must necessarily have some definite Existence and Dimension, by which it only can be in one Place, at one and the same Time; for, could it possibly be in divers Places at once, it may as well be in every Place whatever, and then it must be immense, and without any Dimension at all; nor can we frame a Conception, how

how any Body can be in more Places than one at once, "but by multiplying its Essence; nor is it conceivable, that Dimensions, answering to different Places, can any Way be multiplied, but by Multiplication of the Substance." But I need not stay to confute so manifest and palpable an Absurdity as this.

Hence likewise we may briefly refute the *Lutheran* Notion of the Body of Christ being substantially present with the Elements of the Sacrament, seeing it is contrary to the fore-cited Scriptures, and no less so to Reason.

A real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood, in that blessed and mysterious Representation of it, we readily allow of; but then, we mean not the Reality of its Parts and Substance, but the Reality of its Efficacies and Virtues; such a real Presence as is distinguished from a verbal one, according to that known Distinction, *verbis ponit, sed re tollit*. The Body and Blood of Christ is *verily and indeed* taken, by the Faith of the devout Communicant, in its spiritual Reality and blessed Effects. And this is what the Church of *England* has embraced, as it is grounded on the pure Word of God.

But to proceed, 2dly, The Scripture represents the Man Christ to have *ascended over and above all Heavens*; to be taken into Glory, and to the most excellent Glory, and at the Right Hand of God, and there to sit; the former of which Expressions undoubtedly signifying this, that he is exalted to the most transcendent Residence and most august Presence of the celestial Court; to that very *inaccessible Light where God dwelleth*, and that all-blessed and all-glorious Place, where there are many blissful Mansions, the highest and the chiefest Station whereof is justly given to him, whom in all Things, (Col. i. 18.) it becometh to have

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have the *Pre-eminence*, and that for two Reasons ; as well for his mighty Sufferings upon Earth for Man's Salvation, upon the Account of such Super-eminent Merit, as for his eternal Divinity and Glory which he had *before the World was*. *Power and Riches, and Wisdom and Strength, and Honour and Glory and Blessing*, are therefore ascribed in the Revelations to the *Lamb that was slain, and is alive*.

And this Dignification of him *above every Name*, and his being worthily preferred to the highest Altitude of Glory, and Plenitude of Bliss and Power, and adorned with the brightest Crown of all the celestial Rewards, and installed into a Kingdom and Governance over all, is familiarly represented to our earthly Conception, by being placed at *God's right Hand* : For, as the right Hand of this World's Monarchs is the chief Place of Honour and Distinction ; after the same Manner of Conception is the glorified Jesus said to be at *God's Right Hand*, at the *Right Hand of his Power*, and the *Right Hand of his Throne*.

Farther, he is said, in many Places besides the Text, to *sit* there ; which seems to imply the solid Ground, the firm Possession, the durable Continuance, and undisturbed Rest and Quiet of that glorious Condition in which he is intated : Or it may not unfitly signify the peculiar and honorable Posture of a Judge, which is that of sitting," for he is constituted our Ruler and Judge, and there he sits in the Throne of his Majesty, and upon the Tribunal of Justice."

One Place there is, *viz.* Act. vii. 56. where St. Stephen is said to have *seen the Glory of God, and Jesus standing at his Right Hand* ; which Change of Posture seems to denote to us his ready Assistance of his distressed Servants, as if he had risen

risen off his Seat to plead for them with his Father.

A 3d observable Circumstance of our Lord's Ascension is, that it was performed in a solitary Place; his own Disciples, and they a few, being the only Spectators of the glorious Appearance which both afflicted and amazed them: He ascended not at *Jerusalem*, in the View of the Multitude of that Nation, which some might imagine would have been a proper Means of inducing them, at the last, to acknowledge him for their King, who were altogether for a glorious triumphant King: The Reasons of which divine Procedure seem to be, that, as his Kingdom was not of this World, so he acted in a quite contrary Method to the Kings thereof, who we know proclaim and make what Shew they can of what tends to aggrandize their Glory and Greatness, and are as careful to hide and conceal whatever is derogatory to it. But King Jesus acted the Reverse; for he published his Sufferings, his Wants, and his Disgraces, and whatever else tended to diminish Mens Expectations of his or their own Fondness for external Greatness, and that for every one to behold; while his illustrious Transfiguration was seen but by two or three Disciples, and they charged with the Secret of it; his Resurrection and Ascension likewise by a few chosen Witnesses, and that for this fundamental Reason: Because his was to be a Kingdom of Faith, *all-glorious within*, regardless of transitory Appearances, but established in the Expectation of true and everlasting Glory to come. But there could be no Exercise of Faith, had these Things been exposed to common Sight: For Sight and Faith are inconsistent; Faith being an Act of Obedience to the Command of God, upon the sufficient Attestation of competent Witnesses; and the Preference of
Reward

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Reward and Blessing is, by our Saviour himself, given to it; in those Words to St. Thomas, *Because thou hast seen me, thou believest. Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.*

Another Circumstance there is which has been started lately by a bold Writer, as if our Lord ascended twice to Heaven; the first Time, immediately after his Resurrection, and his Conference with the Woman, who saw him first risen; whom he forbids to touch him, *for I am not yet ascended.* The Mistake is founded only on this Text: And if we translate the Aorist of the Verb *ascended* by the Future Tense, which is not unusual in Scripture, then it will imply, *for I shall, or I will not yet ascend,* and the whole Mistake vanishes.

I omit other Circumstances of this glorious Event, that we may the sooner pass on to the Second Thing proposed; which was to consider some Ends and Benefits of our Lord's ascending into Heaven.

And the first blessed End was, that he might send the Holy Ghost the Comforter; so our Lord opens the Matter to his Disciples, and blames their Sorrow, while he acquainted them of his Departure with an Assurance, that it is *expedient for you that I go away in order to send him; and if I go not away, the Comforter will not come.* And, in another Place, it is affirmed, that the *Holy Ghost was not yet; and the Reason assigned is, because Jesus was not as yet glorified,* i. e. the Holy Spirit was not yet imparted and become the proper Right of Men, by Virtue of the divine Promise and Engagement enacted in the Gospel Covenant, till all Things belonging to the Mediator of that Covenant were fully completed. The Communications of the Spirit of Grace and Comfort were, it is true, out of free Mercy gratuitously imparted to

to abundance of holy Men and Women, before, and under, the legal Dispensation of *Moses*, and seem to have been given even to some out of that Law; but it did not properly belong to that Oeconomy: They had no Claim of Right thereto, either by Promise or other Agreement, otherwise than by Virtue of the future ensuing Dispensation of Jesus Christ, who all along was the latent Spirit and saving Sense of the Law of *Moses*, and when he came into the World perspicuously, brought *Grace and Truth* along with him, and then the Spirit of God explicitly became that great and glorious Condition of the New Covenant. “ And now God is obliged by Right and Justice of a Party covenanting with Mankind to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him; to furnish Men with all that Strength and Assistance of his Grace which may answer the Design of his Son’s coming into the World, and the Voice of his Blood, which may be sufficient to promote Mens Piety in this Life, and secure their Happiness in the other.”

But still the Effusion of the Holy Ghost was to be the Effect and Consequence of our Mediator’s Prayers and Intercession to God the Father for it. According to his own Words, *I will pray the Father*, says he, *and he shall give you another Comforter*. And that his Intercession was to commence, when he was received up to Glory, and entered within the Veil, and had presented the Sacrifice of himself, the dear Purchase and Atonement for our Redemption, and for making up the Breaches, and cementing the Friendship of Mankind with the Father; and as a Return and evidential Proof of a perfect Reconciliation and Peace effected and concluded with him. As the greatest Kings, upon their Inauguration, disperse the greatest Largesses among the People, prevailed with

with him, in Consequence, to send the Holy Ghost, which is the same Thing as to send him in his own Right and Name, seeing he had a Name, and a Right to prevail, and to *shed the Love of God abroad upon our Hearts, by the holy Spirit which is given unto us*; whose sacred Influence, and comfortable Agency, is designed to continue that our Peace with our God, and give a sufficient Assurance to all true Believers, that it was indeed procured for us, and to be with us moreover in the Nature of a *Seal, and Earnest of our Inheritance, until the Time of the purchased Possession comes.*

Hence it was that, *when he ascended up on High, he is said to lead Captivity Captive, and give Gifts unto Men, ordinary and extraordinary*: "Because, as his Merits were the real and only Ground and Foundation of so infinite a Blessing to the World, and the Gift of the Holy Ghost, it was but reasonable it should pass to Men through his Hands, and according to his more peculiar Request and Application to God for it; and likewise by Reason the Mission of the Holy Ghost was intended by God, his Father, as an Act of the highest Honour, that could be done to Christ himself here below, after his Ascension into Heaven:" Thus our Lord speaks, in the 14th Verse of this Chapter, *He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* And, at the 8th and following Verses, *When he (the Holy Ghost) is come, he shall reprove the World of Sin, and of Righteousness, and of Judgment, i. e. of the Sin of not believing in him, the Sin of dishonouring, and Sin of disobeying him; of Righteousness, because he went to the Father, which is an effectual Vindication, that he could be no Impostor, and that he was really righteous, undoubtedly innocent in all Conversation, or else God, the*

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righteous Father, would not have received him; *of Judgment*, because he is appointed the *Judge* both of the Princes of this World, and of all the Men and Spirits in it: Of all which Things the World was reprov'd, was convinc'd by the Preaching, by the Writings of the *Apostles*, inspired and dictated by the Holy Ghost.

And what could be a more evident Proof and Display of the Power and Divinity of Christ to the then World, than his being so powerfully present still with his Disciples, though taken away out of Sight, as to enable them (as he promised) to do *greater Wonders* and Miracles than he himself performed while present in Body? He, the Blessed Spirit, was to advocate and promote the Cause of Christ with Men, while Christ himself was gone to advocate the Cause of us Men with the Father. The Divine Spirit was sent by the Son, being authoris'd thereunto by the Father, to be his perpetual Deputy and Substitute upon Earth, and to act under him in all the Affairs of his Kingdom, and the Furtherance of Mens Salvation, till he bring all his faithful Followers to the Glory that he is gone before to prepare for them.

Thus is Christ to be present, with his Church, as it was in the Beginning so now, and always even unto the End, no otherwise than by his Spirit, "which works the same Effects, and confers the same Graces that he himself would, was he personally upon Earth. And this Presence of his Spirit in all Compleatness of Virtue, and real Effects, he himself judges preferable to all ocular Manifestation of his Person; which though it may serve more to delight our Eyes and entertain our Fancies, yet would signify less to real and desirable Purpose." While we ought to be very cautious how we demean ourselves to this
Holy

Holy Spirit, since he is the vital "Band and Union between Christ and our Souls, without whom we can neither have Interest in Christ, nor Communion with him."

There was, 2dly, a very just End of our Lord's ascending, that he might so triumph over the Devil, and all his Principalities of Darkness, and make a *Shew of them openly, in leading Captivity Captive*; and might, in Justice and Recompence to his meritorious Sufferings, *receive the Reward of his Passion, the Travel of his Soul*. It was meet and fit that his mighty Condescension in emptying himself of Glory and Majesty for our Redemption, and his undergoing such bitter Things, and cruel Hardships for no Fault of his own, should be signally recompensed with *exceeding Glory*. To this End the Psalmist foretold, *Lift up your Heads O ye Gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting Doors, that the King of Glory may come in, and be inaugurated into his everlasting Kingdom, and be glorified with that Glory, which he had with the Father before the World was. Because he drank of the Brook in the Way, therefore he lift up his Head*. That the Ignominy of his Cross may be done away, and that he, the Heir, who had not a Place, while on Earth, to lay his Head, and differed nothing from a Servant, might have the Disposal of all Places in Heaven and Earth.

And this again convinces the World of Righteousness, that is, the Righteousness of the just Father in thus rewarding the Humiliation of the Son with a glorious Exaltation, which amply cleared up the Justice of the Father, who forgot not, in due Time, to vindicate the Innocence of his Son, so much oppressed with the *Contradiction and Cruelty of Sinners*, and to crown his Calamity with the greater Glory.

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3dly,

3dly, He ascended to fulfil the Prophecies, according to our Lord's own Words, in *Luke xxiv. 25.* *Ought not Christ to suffer these Things, and so enter into his Glory, according to what the Prophets had spoken?* As in the Psalmist, beside that just before mentioned, *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right Hand, till I make thine Enemy thy Footstool;* and again, *thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast lead Captivity Captive, thou hast received Gifts for Men;* and some other Passages to the like Effect: All which had their Accomplishment in this Event.

So *Enoch* and *Elijah* were his Types. So the Mystery of the High Priest, entering with the Sprinkling of Blood into the Holy of Holies, was unfolded and dismissed for ever after, by our Lord's entering not into the *holy Places made with Hands, which are the Figures of the True, but once into Heaven itself, now to appear in the Presence of God for us.*

In the 4th Place, and especially, he ascended to his Father, that he might become a powerful and an ever-living Mediator and Intercessor with God on our Behalf, to procure a free Access of our Prayers to him, and a favourable Reception of our Requests, and a Supply of all that is needful and truly convenient for us, in all our spiritual and temporal Wants; that he might from thenceforth himself present our Petitions, which proceed from Faith in him, and be our perpetual Patron and Friend, only Priest, only Reconciler to God; ready also to atone the Defects of our sincere Prayers, for obtaining Pardon and Forgiveness to the truly Penitent, Strength and Assistance to the weak sincere Christian, and the Crown of everlasting Life to them that *overcome*, and have *fought the good Fight, and finished the Faith.*

And

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And all this, and whatever other Blessings of this Life, and that which is to come, he joins in our Prayers and intercedes with the Father for, he obtains by pleading the Merits of his Sacrifice *once offered up*, and presenting his precious Blood. To which, we may easily credit, the Father can deny nothing that he moves for; so infinitely precious and prevailing is the Evidence of such Merit, and so everlastingly dear is his filial Relation to him.

But then we must observe and believe, on our Part, that as he thus powerfully and successfully intercedes for all the Benefits which he has purchased for us, that he solicits the Father for not one but contracted, none but promised Mercies and Benefits; and that too only upon certain declared Terms, and covenanted Conditions, to be observed on our Sides: We may be assured he will never appear to move and address the Father any otherwise on our Account; for "he is certainly an impartial Mediator, and will shew himself as careful of God's Honour and Authority, as of our Good and Welfare. And therefore he cannot, nor will he ever move God to relax his Laws and Punishments to wicked obdurate Rebels and Sinners, or to obtain over-powering and irresistible Grace to careless Christians, to save their Pains and Duty; since the New Covenant promulged by him offers no Pardon but to the Penitent, nor any saving Grace but to the Sincere and Industrious."

Again, we must be careful to observe and remember that we offer up no Prayers or Supplications of Thanksgivings, but only in and through his blessed Name and Merits: For he is the Fountain and Foundation of God's Mercies and Favours to Men: He is the supreme *Dispenser over the House of God*; he has the Disposal of all Gifts and Graces,

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and every Blessing that descends from Heaven upon the Sons of Men, must come through his Hands, and is solely owing to his Mediation: For alas! of ourselves, we have not the least Merit of our own to sue for any Thing at the Throne of Grace. Let Men become sensible of that, and thence learn to love, to honour and please whom they depend on, *even as they do the Father*, both whose Will is one, and whose Commands are the same. And therefore, since we depend upon the Son for all that we have or hope for, we must be mindful and assiduous of doing those Things that are well-pleasing to him, as we desire his Favour, or value his Intercession; and, to all such, he is sure to make good, and to obtain from the Father, the Promise both of this Life, and of the next: *For, in all Things, he is able to give, and able to save, to the uttermost, all those that come to him.*

Here again appears the Folly of the *Romish* Superstition, in praying to Saints and Angels, and procuring I know not how many Intercessors in Heaven.

But is it not all superfluous whatever they can say on this Head? Since the Person of Christ himself is able of himself to *save all, to the uttermost*, that address to him, do they not directly diminish the Efficacy and Sufficiency of his Intercession, when they make Application to others? Can we ever be sure, that any Saint or Angel knows our Wants, or can hear our Prayers, as we are sure and certain that Christ both knows and hears them every where? Will Men presume to ask Favours of God in a different Way than he has directed us to seek them? Is he not the Master of his own Favours, and of the Manner how he will confer them? Is there Mention of any Mediator in Scripture, but one, and he is Christ?

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In very Deed, this dangerous Error has not the least Shadow of Foundation in true and genuine Scripture, which makes it the more amazing how they have the Assurance to support it. But they truly who can lose their Senses and their Reason, and leave the Scripture so far as to maintain Transubstantiation, may maintain any Thing what they please, whether Truth and Falshood are not the same Thing, or rather, whether Interest is not all in all. But I hasten to mention,

5thly, How our Lord, at his Ascension, was invested with a Kingdom and the Rule over all the Creation of Spirits, and Men; *Angels, Principalities, and Powers*, being made *subject to him*, that *all Knees should bow and do Homage to the King of Glory, whom God delighteth to honour.*

This, I think, is to be understood of his mediatorial Kingdom; for the natural essential Kingdom (as soon as there were any Subjects or Creatures) was coeternal with him and the Father, and that can never be surrendered up to the Father, as his mediatorial one, assumed upon the Fall of Man, will be at the *Restitution of all Things*; as soon as *all Enemies are put under his Feet*, the End of it will cease: This Kingdom he will possess no longer than till Things are actually *subdued unto him*, until which Time, as the Head of human Race, *the second Adam*, the *Lord from Heaven*, hath assumed our human Nature into Heaven, by which Means he is, in the Nature of Things, a compleat and exact Mediator between God and Man; we being as much interested in that Share or Moiety of Christ, as God the Father is in the other Moiety of his divine Nature: So long therefore as he is personally united to our Nature, which is of Necessity subject to God, he continues in some Sort of Subjection to the Father, even while he is King in his own mediatorial Kingdom. But,

when that Day of Judgment, and Consummation of all Things comes, then shall the Son of Man, or our human Nature, which now qualifies him for a reigning mediatorial King, be so subjected as to have no mediatorial Kingdom or Power left; and then all Power and Dominion will be, from thenceforth and for ever, solely and immediately exercised by the Deity, that God may be all in all, as before the Fall of Man.

And this mediatorial Kingdom of Christ is founded in the New Covenant, and commenced its Title immediately after the Fall of our first Parents; though it was not perfected till after he had triumphed over Death and the Cross, till which Time *John*, his Fore-runner, and he himself, and seventy Disciples, preached in the Style of the *Kingdom of Heaven, being then at Hand*.

The Title was again revived and proclaimed anew in the same Covenant, that was renewed with *Abraham* and his Posterity; and by Virtue of this kingly Authority, he gave Laws to *Israel*, and ruled directly over them, and sometimes went visibly *in and out before them*, to lead and conduct them in their Marches and Difficulties, and was angry with them when they required a more visible King of their Brethren like themselves. The Constitutions and Laws of that his Kingdom are those of the Bible, which have been made, adapted, explained, and repealed according to the several Exigencies and Conditions of his Church and People peculiarly received into Covenant, and subjected to the Sanctions of his Laws here on Earth.

And this his mediatorial Governance was enlarged at his Ascension to Heaven, by the Addition of all Angels, Thrones and Dominions being subjected to him; and he has moreover deputed other subordinate Ministers and Gover-

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nors of his Church under him, as the Kings of the Earth, and the spiritual Pastors and Governors, and Subordinations under them, for the Defence and for the Edification thereof. And all these hold of their supreme Head, Christ, who is stiled *the Head of the Church*; and are tied to his Laws in all Things relating to our Souls, which are the Object of Christ's Care; and they all who profess in his Name, wheresoever dispersed over the Earth, are cemented with one another as Members, by embracing his Laws, and following his Directions and Truths, and, by living up to them, keep Communication with the Head, and receive vital Strength, or Growth from him.

And, therefore, all who are thus spiritually subject and loyal to Christ, the King of Kings, may glory and comfort themselves with his Power, since he is an omnipotent King, can do all Things, and nothing can withstand his Will; and, as he is a loving and no less vigilant one, to whom all Secrets are open and known, therefore we may be confident, that not the *Gates of Hell*, that *last Enemy of ours, Death*, without a Resurrection, not the Malice of Devils, and Conspiracies of the Powers of Darkness, nor all the Combinations upon Earth, can finally prevail to destroy his Church, though he may suffer it to be afflicted for a Time, that in their Affliction his Servants may know him the better, and call upon him the more.

And farther, as a gracious King, he sends powerful Aid and Assistance to every particular Subject, in the several Engagements with his and their Enemies; and, in his Might and Strength, fighting with him, and for him, and for themselves, they will be *more than Conquerors*; and *to him that overcometh will be grant to sit upon his Throne, even as he himself overcame and sat down*

on his Father's Throne. He rewards as a King those who faithfully serve and obey him, and as a King punishes and cuts asunder the *Rebellious* who would not have him to rule over them; and none can escape his Power, or abide his Wrath.

He likewise sends Comfort and Consolation to his Servants and Subjects in Distress; for he *knows* all their several *Infirmities*; he pities and relieves them. Upon these, and many other Accounts and Benefits which I have not Time to enumerate, it is expedient for us that he left the World and went to the Father, and now sits at his right Hand.

Let us therefore, in the last Place, give heed to the religious Influence this ought to have upon us. And first, the Thoughts of it ought to excite in us a great Chearfulness in our Devotion: He commands us, in the 24th Verse before the Text, *to ask in his Name, and we shall receive, that our Joy may be full.* Our Sins may and ought indeed to make us humble, but our Faith again in this ought to make us chearful; for herein is Joy, if any Man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, *Jesus Christ the Righteous*, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins. See how he ascends in his Argument in another Place; *Who shall lay any Thing to the Charge of God's Elect? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right Hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us.* And therefore, since we know that his Merits are so vast, and his Interest in Heaven so great, as to obtain whatever he asks; in the Confidence thereof, we should be exhorted *to come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may find Grace to help in Time of Need.*

Had we no Friend in the Court of Heaven, then indeed our prodigious Guilt might well astonish us, and make us despair of Acceptance with him whom we have offended; but, seeing we have such

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a powerful Friend, and so loving of us, and ready to introduce us, and speak for us, and interest all his infinite Stock of Merit for Favour to the returning Penitent, we ought to lay aside every slavish Fear, all despairing Thoughts, and approach the infinitely-tender God and Father with the Freedom, joined with the Reverence of Sons, adopted by him in Christ.

With what unspeakable Joy does St. Paul acquaint us that *God hath quickened us together with Christ, has raised us together with him, and made us to sit in heavenly Places in Christ Jesus?* i. e. we are put into the happy Capacity of all this by our Repentance and Obedience, *the Blood of Christ* has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers, and given us an abundant Entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. This is the new and the living Way, which he has consecrated for us through the Veil of his Flesh; herein our Hope, as the Anchor of our Soul, should be sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the Veil, whither our Forerunner is for us entered, that where he is we may be also.

The Ascension of Christ is our Exaltation and Preferment, and whither the Glory of the Head is gone before, thither likewise is the Hope of the related Body called. Let us then rejoice in these Triumphs of Christ Jesus, and again I say rejoice, for the Triumphs of human Nature over all its Enemies. That it should be exalted to sit far above all the dignified Angelic Host, and to be continually resident at God's right Hand, to have a Feeling of, and to obtain Compassion for our Infirmities, is it not an Honour as infinite as is advantageous? He is *Bone of our Bone, and Flesh of our Flesh*; he has the Affection of a Brother, strengthened and invested with an almighty Power, and immense Mercy to give and to do towards us

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us as he will; who, as he is equal to God in Glory, Power and Goodness, “ yet was once more than equal unto us, being the lowest in all Manner of Anguish, of Grievances and Afflictions, that either our Nature, or State, or casual Condition of Life, can be charged with.”

We ought to be exceeding glad, in that the Heart of this our High-Priest is sensibly touched at the Sorrows and Miseries of all those who present their Condition to him in Prayer for Redress. He himself being first *consecrated* to his eternal Priesthood *through Afflictions*, and he bore grievous Things *for the Sake of the Joy set before him*. He even learned Obedience by the Things which he suffered. “ Being infinite in Knowledge, as he was God, and of most perfect Knowledge as Man, he could learn nothing by conversing here on Earth with Men, but only the Experience of godly Grief and Sorrows for our Follies and Impieties, such Sorrows as were the proper Fruits of our Sins: We brought them forth, and he tasted the Bitterness of them.” This then is our Comfort, that he cannot now forget them in Heaven, but that he will always make Intercession for us, out of the fresh and never-failing Memory and Experience of his former Grief and Sorrows for our Sins. And what good Thing is it, then which he will not ask the Father for us? And what is it that our heavenly Father, for his Sake, will not give us, if we *ask in Faith, in his Name, nothing doubting*? There is nothing fitting in Heaven but will be conceded, nor yet upon Earth but we shall have it; for he gives us more than all the Things upon Earth, if he gives us a Heart to consider and to undervalue the Vanities of it.

2dly, Therefore, and to conclude, this ought to reach us to set our Affections above, and wean them from this empty unsatisfying World. Our Hearts
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and Thoughts should follow our Lord, and ascend with him to Heaven, where our Interest and Happiness, our Treasure and chief Concernment depend, where our Country, our Possession, and our Rest are to be expected. It should surely engage our best Affection, our principal Care and Study, how to gain and secure these our Joys and Hopes: It instructs us to care for and to possess the Things of this World as in a Journey to a better, as Pilgrims and Strangers, with Thoughts of removing and passing through; to mind and desire the Accommodations thereof, not by Way of Settlement; to set our Hearts upon them, with no other than that transitory Regard they deserve, for their transitory Use and Convenience; as Things that will be, in a short Space, entirely unserviceable to our Beings; but daily more and more ascend in Meditations, and elevate our Regards and Esteems to superior Objects, above every irregular Pleasures or Profit of this World, till we gain the Ascendant over them; and suffer not those that are lawful to have any farther Hold of our Wishes or Endeavours than what justly belongs to them.

We should be *looking up to the everlasting Hills, from whence cometh our Help*; steadfast and immovable against all the Vexations of this Life, we should look into Eternity, that durable and delightful Mansion, and from that Eminence, overlook the Vale of Tears and Sorrows of this miserable Life, and despise the Losses and the Grievs thereof for the Sake of the other superlative Joys, and be as little affected or diverted as possible from their Contemplation by the little unworthy Joys or Possessions of this Earth: And, by these Views and Prospects, we ought to learn, and resolve to adjust and order all our Actions, and make a Judgment of Things

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here below, as they relate to our future Expectations, and, accordingly, esteem that only, and in the true Issue of Things, to be solidly good for us now, which tends to further and promote our Attainment of it hereafter, and that to be evil and truly hurtful to us, and nothing else, but what hinders our Pursuit, abates our Desires, and intercepts our Hopes of them; and that all worldly Enjoyments, and Goods of Sense, so much coveted and sought after, are in their own Nature apt to do, without a very watchful Regulation of our Faith, and Recollection of our superior Hopes, which we are put in mind of when we repeat this Article of our Creed, that *Christ ascended into Heaven.*

And whoever has this Hope in himself of following him thither, must live as he lived, and *purify himself in all holy Conversation, as he was pure.* We must not entertain ourselves altogether with the Glories of his Ascension; for then we shall incur the Reprehension of the Men of Galilee. *Ye Men of Galilee, why stand ye here thus gazing? That same Jesus, whom ye see gone to Heaven, shall again in like Manner come to judge the World.* Rather let our Care and our Curiosity be turned all to a Preparation for his Return; to the Thoughts of what Manner of Persons we desire then to be found; (and how soon God only knows our Period for qualifying ourselves may be at a Close;) living constantly as in the Sight of our Judge, an incessant Inspector of all our Thoughts, of all our Misdoings, and an Ear-witness of all our Speeches, whether good or bad.

May we all live in the due Influence of such a fearful Expectation, and of the Hopes of those Joys at God's right Hand; having the best of our Mind and dearest of our Affections on the Things
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of our everlasting Futurity, for the Sake of him who came forth from the Father and came into the World, and again left the World and went to the Father. To whom, in the Unity of the Holy Ghost, be given all Praise, Glory, Dominion and Obedience. *For thou only art Holy, thou only art the Lord, thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the Glory of God the Father.*



S E R.



Sunday after Ascension.

S E R M O N

The Eighteenth.

*Preparation for the Sacrament on
Whit-Sunday.*

1 PET. iv. 7, 8. Beginning of the Epistle of
this Day.

*The End of all Things is at hand; be ye therefore
sober, and watch unto Prayer; But, above all
Things, have fervent Charity among yourselves,
for Charity shall cover the Multitude of Sins.*

THIS Epistle was directed to the
Jews by the great Apostle of that
Nation, St. Peter; and these Words
of it, to admonish them of the ap-
proaching Dissolution which was coming on them,
and ready at the Door to enter, in the Phrase of
another Apostle. The old typifying Things of
their Religion were not only done away, and
abolished by our Lord, who was the Substance of
what was meant, fulfilling every Thing that was
to be filled up, in Fullness of Time; but their
Royal City and Temple, Civil State and Con-
stitution,

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stitution also, were now just upon expiring in a final Destruction, as he likewise foretold to his Disciples, largely describing Particulars in the xxivth of *Matthew*, and other Evangelists; telling them, that *this Generation* of living Men, when he spake those Words, *should not pass away*, or be dead and gone, *till all those Things should be fulfilled*: Some of them should be alive, as it happened, forty Years afterwards, and see the dreadful Accomplishment upon *Jerusalem*; but our Lord gave them no other Certainty of the Time when, but that it should be very sudden: Therefore, in the xxist of *St. Luke*, he charges them, that their Hearts be not *over-charged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and the Cares of this Life*, but to *watch and pray always*, and be in Preparation to expect it. Our Apostle, in this Expectation, himself means the very same Thing, and gives the same Caution in fewer Words; *The End of all Things is at Hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto Prayer*. This is the proximate Meaning of, *the End of all Things being then at Hand*.

We have now a Season at hand, and that of a double Aspect, which ought forcibly to engage us to the Practice of these Duties.

1. The Commemoration of the Mission of the Holy Ghost, which is (as I may say) the *End*, and Consummation of the Christian Oeconomy; the last, and most invincible Testimony of the Truth of our Religion, against all the Prejudices and Objections that were then extant in the World; and the Fountain of all Abilities and Comforts to the Performers of it was then opened, and widely diffused through the whole World, on all those whose Faith shall embrace it with Obedience.

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2. As a Preparatory to the receiving the holy Communion, which is another Office and Duty of next *Sunday*; than which two I named, there is none more necessary to remind you of, as conducive to the due Preparation, meet to make us worthy Partakers of the same. *Prayer* and *Charity* are now therefore before us, to be considered as Preparatives for the holy Communion.

It were easy to answer all the Excuses, all Pretences whatsoever, of absenting from it, and shew the Necessity and great Advantages of frequent Communion. I do not remember one single Objection, which an indifferent Casuist may not satisfy and remove from every one of you that are of Age of Discretion; and, at the same time, evince the Folly and the Danger of persisting in that Absence; so impossible is it to make any colourable Excuse to justify any one, who has the least Care of their Salvation; and who, by the Tenour of their Lives, are uncertain whether they ever shall have another Opportunity. Men must put off all Thoughts of Danger, Death, and Salvation, (amazing to be said of Christians!) if they still defer to come; because Procrastination, from Time to Time, is the most destructive of all the wily Devices of the Devil; and, by the *Dexterity of Sin*, and the *Love of the World*, hardens into little less than an incurable Condition, if continued in after full Conviction to the contrary. I shall exceedingly commiserate and lament over the unconvincible Folly and Hardness of those who will not be persuaded to come. I wou'd I could find an Excuse for their Madness, who deprive themselves of such Benefits; but, I protest to you, I cannot find out so much as one Fig-Leaf to help them to cover their Shame. Could I suppose any Scruples remaining in the Minds of any present, in the
Name

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Name of God, why so backward to apply themselves to the stated Method of solving them? Who is unwilling to hear them? Who, rather, is not ready to set right the Mistakes, or the Ignorance of any in this Matter? But if your Scruples proceed from a secret Unwillingness to leave your Sins, that Excuse, we must tell you, can never be excused you. Apply it to the Touchstone of a serious Examination; if you find that to be the Case, be not surprised if I tell you *a Truth* you little think of, *i. e.* ye are resolved to go down to Perdition, and add daily to your Punishment there, by Increase of your Crimes, every Day you live here.

To what Purpose do such Persons think of Heaven? Why retain the Hopes of it? Wherefore come they to Church, and hear the Commandments, which is the Way into it, if resolved not to renew and take upon themselves the Christian Covenant, if they will seldom or never obey his Commandment, of *doing this in Remembrance of our Saviour Christ*? Ye obey not the Commandments, if ye intend not, in good earnest, to forsake your Sin. You, in Effect, resolve upon — what? It is dreadful; I spoke it before. Besides, you are here in this resolved Neglect, not only in secret, but open Contradiction to your Appearance in this Place, which is the *Gate of Heaven*. But, if ye will bring yourselves to Repentance, and break off your Sins, by Newness of Life, then I am sure all Doubts about the Sacrament, from that Instant, ought to vanish, and be no more heard of; and, in Hopes that it will be so, I go on to speak of those Qualifications, which will fit you for worthy Receivers. My Text will not allow me now to speak of all, but I refer you to the Exhortation of our excellent Church, which teaches them well and truly, as

“ Repentance, and Examination of ourselves,
 “ according to the Commandments of God,
 “ Faith in God’s Mercies through Christ, and
 “ Restitution of Injuries.” All these are implicitly included under the Duty of daily Prayer, as Requisites of it: For he that prays to God as he ought, must first recollect the Sins and Errors he has been guilty of by Commission, or Omision, and confess them with hearty and unfeigned Sorrow, and resolve never to do the like; he must have Faith in God’s great Goodness, and certain Promises to forgive, in, and through the Merits and Mediation of Christ our Lord, who is the reconciling Propitiation that prevails both to pardon and reward upon those Terms; he must undo whatever Injuries and Wrongs he has done to others, and forgive those done to himself, on Condition of his own Forgiveness: And this he must do in his daily Course of Prayers, else they will be Abomination and Mockery in the Ears of God, and derive down upon him Curses instead of Blessings. He must also give humble and hearty Thanks to Almighty God for all the Blessings and Favours conferred upon him; but especially for that inestimable one (the Fountain and Foundation of all the rest) the Redemption of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ, which the said Exhortation mentions as another qualifying Duty for the worthy Coming to that holy Table.

Our Text specifies two particular Dispositions for Prayer; “ That we be *sober* ;” and, “ That we *watch* .” Sobriety, or, in other Words, a Regulation of our Passions and Appetites, is an admirable Method and Frame of Temper for that heavenly Employment; because it is their Ungovernableness only makes us commit so many Sins, which render us either averse, or very cold to that Duty; but this Duty of Temperance and Sobriety

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I have considered on another Occasion * : So that the other, of *watching unto Prayer*, remains only to be persuaded to now ; under which may be comprised all that holy Fervency, Zeal, and Constancy required in our Devotions.

1. In the first Place, how readily ought we to be entreated, since it is so much in our Power to be fervent in Prayer. If we are really, or at all affected with a due Sense of our innumerable Wants and Miseries, we cannot well be otherwise. If a Promise is made of the *fervent Prayer* being effectual, who can doubt that Encouragement ? But who can be said to deserve to receive the Kindness, or Favour, which he seems unconcerned whether he has or not ? or asks so coldly as if he valued not, as if he needed it not ? Importunity, it is true, prevails upon Men, through their personal Weakness, as the unjust Judge in the Parable redressed the Grievance of the poor Woman to get rid of her importunate Teazing : But our Importunity in Prayer, to the just Judge of all the Earth, obtains upon him to hear and grant our Request, not by making any the least Change or Alteration in his divine Mind (a Weakness incompatible to the unchangeable Nature of the Godhead) but altogether as our Importunity and Ardor, the longer they continue, the more they make a Change in our own Minds and Desires. It is a Sort of reflux Tide of Godliness, which comes from the Shores of Heaven, whither we all hope to land, which bears down our Wickednesses with our own Consent, and cleanses us from our Sins with our own Endeavours ; for the more frequently, and the longer, heavenly Things are coveted and sought after, the less will temporal ones be regarded by us ; which is that very Alteration in us, and Return

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* *Vide Sermon for Septuagesima Sunday.*

to Happiness, which God would have wrought in us by that means, and therefore wisely suspends his Answer and Blessings on that Condition.

And when Prayer begins to work that Change in us, then it is, that it pierceth the Clouds, and besieges the Throne, and the Mercy-Seat of Heaven, and *will not turn away* (as the wise Man says) *till the Almighty regards it*, till he inclines his Ear and hears, and gives a benign Answer, either by granting every Request, if in Things convenient and needful for us, or suited to the Ends and Purposes which his Providence has designed to accomplish in this World by us; or else by as kind a Denial, which is often a greater Blessing of the two. This is it which makes Importunity necessary, and not rude and troublesome, in the Court of Heaven, as in the Courts upon Earth it is accounted. Heaven willingly suffers the Violence of those Applications, for our Amendment, towards our greater Happiness; and so, in Fact, the constant, importunate Suppliant takes it by Force, by having bettered himself in the Assault, and copied more of the Likeness of him with whom he conversed so much, his *Father which is in Heaven*, and his Saviour, who came down from thence,

Things of such infinite Importance deserve, above all, to encourage all the Forces and Fervors of our Souls in obtaining them; they cannot be bought too dear. If the Progress and Completion of the Life of Grace depend so mightily upon the Aids and Communications of Heaven, (without which we can do nothing) and if they only are to be derived by Prayer and Supplication, and the Improvement of what we have received in a better Life, there is no desisting. If holy Prayer is the instrumental Means that brings down, and the Channel that conveys all manner
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of Blessings, spiritual, temporal, and eternal : If Supply and Consolation to all our Wants and Distresses in ourselves, our Friends, and Governors : If Protection and Safeguard against the Dangers we are afraid of, and the Temptations we are exposed to : If Improvement in all Graces, all come from hence, and are owing so much to it, how wise and worthy is it to offer them up with a fixed Attention of Mind, with zealous Intention and Ardor of Spirit ?

Manifold are the obligatory Reasons, to be constant in Prayer, *Eph. vi. 18. Watching thereunto with all Perseverance.* Since this is the Homage and Religion that Man pays to his Maker, and which distinguishes him from all other Creatures ; and because it is an Acknowledgment of God's transcendent Majesty and Power, of his Goodness and Presence, and of our own Meanness and Imperfection ; of his Sovereignty, Sufficiency and overflowing Treasure of all Happiness and good Gifts, and of our wretched, our daily Penury and Want of them ; how constantly should our devotional Testimonies of Love and Praise, Gratitude and Thanksgiving ascend up to him, as long as the Emanations of Goodness and Mercy over all his Works, flow down constantly upon us from our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, in continual Benefactions and Preservations of us ?

The Expression of Thanks, both in Words and Life, is all that our Poverty can repay, or his Fullness admit of, in Return for innumerable Presents and Streams of Kindness : Since we, sinful indigent Creatures, may this Way disburthen our Minds of Guilt, vent all our Ails, tell our Grievances and Troubles to the most merciful, loving and gracious Father, and ask of the best Friend his Advice and Direction ; who has invited us to come boldly to him, that we may receive Grace in Time

of Need from him; who is so unchangeably mindful of his Promises, so large in Bounty, so truly able, so exceeding willing to supply our Wants, to avert his own Anger from us, to relieve our Distresses, and wipe away our Tears, either with external Comforts, or inward Consolations; who does not think it worth his while to be diligent in asking, if he can have all these Things for asking for? Seeing it is so great a Privilege thus to have the Ear of the great King of Kings, the Sovereign of the World, and Lord of Glory, none ought to be slack to dignify himself with those Honours, which the King delights to honour us with. We may wait at the Levees and Courts of great Men of this World Day after Day; some must be disappointed of those Favours which all can not have: But if we duly fall on our Knees at Home, and daily come hither to the Courts of the Lord's House, all these our better employ'd Suits and Petitions will be granted, out of a Store which all Men and Ages can never exhaust: Nay this is the Method to succeed in the other Applications. For the Lord over all turns the Hearts of Kings and great Men as he pleases, for, or against our real Interest, as we behave ourselves in his Sight; and makes all Things, Adversity as well as Prosperity, *work together for their Good who fear him*, and address themselves to him in Prayer, as they ought.

But what if it is impossible to be good, as in Truth it is, without the Use of this Means? and is this the Way to maintain Acquaintance and Intercourse with the other World? to rear up our sensual heavy Mind, too much conversant on the Things of this Life? to refine and spiritualise that heavenly Part of us, which, in our present Condition, is exceeding apt to delight so much in the *Things that are seen*, to the Loss and Disrelish of those

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those that are *eternal*? is Virtue only kept alive, and grows it to Fruit by this necessary Culture? Who then that intends to lead a godly Life dares presume to pretermitt the Duty. As they who quite omit Prayer in their Hearts, may be said wholly to live *without God in the World*; so they who are remiss at it, decline in Holiness, and advance proportionably in Sin, which will in Time either make them wholly leave it off, or which is much at one, come at last to a mere, formal Outside of Religion, of being seen now and then at Church.

How ought we then, upon all these Accounts, to be both constant and fervent in our Prayers? To *pray always and not faint*? as our Lord commands in the 18th of *St. Luke*; not by Fits and Starts, but *without ceasing*, as *St. Paul* bids us, i. e.

First, never cease to maintain in ourselves an habitual Frame of Mind fit for Prayer, having the Love of Virtue and Disposition of Holiness, which are Ingredients in a holy and acceptable Application to God; being that true *Spirit*, or Temper, of *Supplication* spoken of in Scripture. By this our Hearts will be fixed and habituated to God and Goodness.

2dly, Not ceasing from Prayer, implies, That we embrace the regular and stated Times and Opportunities of it. They at least are twice a Day, Morning and Evening; that so the Christian Sacrifice of Prayer and Thanksgiving might correspond with that at the *Jewish* Temple of old, daily offered at those Times, and which is also called the *never-ceasing Sacrifice*.

And, is it not most reasonable for us, every Day of our Lives, who live not one of them ever without sinning against the Supporter of our Beings, that we beg a Blessing on our several Labours and Undertakings from him who can solely prosper them?

them? and supplicate his divine Protection from Dangers, ghostly and bodily, who can only secure us? and, again at Night, confess all our helpless or heedless Miscarriages, resolve anew against the like, and give Thanks for all Mercies received?

Let none pretend Business to exempt them from this Duty: For the busiest of all, and the most ignorant of all, have both Leisure and Capacity in Abundance to put up Ejaculations to God several Times a Day, if they are but willing to advance the Interest of their Souls.

But, if we would pray as often as holy *Daniel*, thrice a Day, then we ought to come once a Day, at least, to the public Prayers, or send one Representative out of every Family thither, to make up a Congregation to the Lord, to worship him in the *Beauty of Holiness*; where he *delights to be* present, and keep Residence, and give special Audience to our Prayers. The Efficacy that is grounded upon a divine Promise where a few are gathered together, is indubitable; and the united Supplications and Intercessions of many, uttering the same Words and common Wants, must greatly prevail with the Almighty to grant our Requests. In short, they take the likeliest Course to become the holiest Persons, who pray oftenest.

All that I have said hitherto, though very short and much too brief for what such a Subject deserves, regards the daily Office of Prayer and constant Duty of our Lives: But, at this Time, we have a new Encouragement to be more confident and earnest therein; since our blessed Lord, who taught us to pray, is ascended to Heaven, there to be our Advocate and Intercessor with the Father, for whatever we shall ask in Submission to his Will, in, and through the blessed Name and Sake of himself. Thither we ought to think of following him in devout Meditations, and Affec-
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tions lifted up above Things below, and beg of him never to leave, nor forsake us, during our appointed Stay on this Earth, where we are absent from him and our Home, in a strange Country full of Enemies, full of Chances and of Troubles.

2dly, There is another especial Reason, at this Time, incumbent on us to be more vigilant and intent to this Duty, as we are about to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper very shortly: For now we should be trimming our *Lamps to go and meet the Lord*, and brighten the Light of a good Conversation that used to shine from us, and be more particular in our Examination; confessing, in general, our Frailties; confessing, in particular, our wilful Follies, and Breaches of our Vow since we last received; entreating God, that he would forgive all that is past, and repair whatever is defaced by Sin; *cleanse us from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*, and furnish us with all Graces, that so we may come holy and clean to that heavenly Feast.

Would we practise universal Righteousness both in Thought, Word, and Deed, towards God, and towards Man, I can neither advise you of a better Preparation than that, nor of a better Method to attain it, than Perseverance in fervent Prayer. For you may *pray* yourself into the Hatred, yea the Forgiveness, of whatever you have done amiss; and so you may *wash your Hands in Innocency, and come to the Altar*: You may, through the Strength and the Sincerity of your Repentance and holy Resolutions, *pray* yourselves at last into a Love and Relish of Virtue and Goodness; to be corroborated and strengthened in the blessed Eucharist, which adds Ability to the Weak, and Strength to the Strong.

Not

Not that I would lay the Stress upon your bare formal going-over so many Prayers as a *Weekly Preparation*, and such Directions may exact, but upon the Tenor of a good Life and regular Devotions in private ; or else, upon a fixed Resolution that they shall become such hereafter ; and then such Prayers, in Books, put up with Attention of Soul and Contrition of Heart, may do much Good.

We are now arrived to the next Branch of my Text, to speak of Charity, which we are required also to be fervent in : *But, above all Things, have fervent Charity among yourselves.* A Duty this of such universal Extent, that I am abridged in Time from speaking of it in any Scope. I can only say, in general, that our Apostle had great Reason to charge us *above all Things*, to put this on ; since it was the chief Design and Aim of our Saviour, and of his Religion, which is all over Peace and Love, in order to reconcile Men to God, and Men to one another ; since it is the *Radix* whence all the Christian sociable Graces and Virtues grow out ; the *Band of Peace and Perfectness* : For it forbids the doing the least Wrong, by Word or Action, or so much as in Thought : *It thinketh no Evil* ; but inclines us to do all the possible Good we can ; to relieve the Needy and Miserable with a Portion of our Substance, as far as we are able, or with Pity and Condolance where we fall short ; to vindicate the Innocent ; to instruct the Ignorant, and persuade the Obstinate, and do all Benefits and Advantages both to the Bodies and Souls of Men that lie in our Way : To forgive the Injuries we receive from others ; to envy none ; to wish well to, and rejoice with all that rejoice.

Read St. Paul describing this *Queen of Virtues* (as St. Chrysostom styles her) and mind him setting her out in large illustrious Rays of Glory and of Beauty,

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Beauty, in 1 Cor. Chap. 13. But observe so that ye may imitate, and transplant them into your own Bosoms: You will find him there giving her the Preference to all Attainments of *Knowledge*, or Mysteries of Religion; to Prophecy itself; and to *Faith* likewise, which, however magnified by some People, is not to compare to her; nor yet her sister *Hope*: For they two, and all the rest, are only serviceable to us in this transient World, and will be nullified at our Exit out of it; but *Charity* will return with us to Heaven, where it will be an eternal Supply to our eternal Happiness. It must needs, therefore, be our supreme Care to be studious of the Practice and Perfection of it upon Earth, as far as our Imperfection will attain, because it is the choice and delightful Imitation of that divinest Property of Mercy, Loving-kindness and Forbearance, which the Godhead delights most to be known by; because it is so comfortable and sweet in the Performance to ourselves, moreover, making every Obligation of the Yoke, Christ has imposed upon us, easy; and the whole Burden of Obedience light, by the Labour of that Love which counteth nothing a Burden to the Beloved.

It is also most beneficial to our Fellow Creatures; answering one main Design of obliging the Sons of Men unto the Services and Offices of Religion, that thereby, through Peace, through Concord and Amity, the Good of Mankind might be promoted. And how dwelleth the Love of Things above; how little the Religion of a Christian; where is the Imitation of God; or, in what is our Obedience to his Precepts, if we omit that which is the *End of his Commandments*, and the *Fulfilling of the whole Law*? as Charity, we are assured, is, by the Volume of that Law.

He

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He that is of an uncharitable Temper has, therefore, no one Virtue to shelter himself under ; his Sins remain upon him, his Virtues are false worldly Appearances, of no Account before Heaven : But He that is possessed of the Contrary, in good Degree, has the Spirit of God resting on him ; for *He that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God*, says St. John ; who says also of the other, *He that loveth not his Brother, abideth in Death* ; and again, *It is by this Love the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil* ; by this, Christians are to be known from other Men, and the true Christians from the Counterfeit ; and, according as we can answer, in Proofs and Evidences of this, at the last Day of Discrimination, so will be our final Sentence and Award.

But what Child of the Devil dares go to partake of the Table of the Lord, as all those are like to do, who go thither and yet remain in Malice, in Spite, in Envy, or any other grievous Crime contrary to Love and Charity ? Oh ! venture not to go to the Feast of Love with a malicious Heart. Whoever is so mad, his Malice will be but increased ; instead of Christ, the Devil will dwell with him, and fill him fuller of all Iniquity. A strange, unseasonable, unchristian Perverseness, not then to forgive our Brother, and be reconciled to him, in good Will, when we are expecting of God Forgiveness of our own innumerable many and heinously great Trespases, nay upon that very Condition too ! Not then to be reconciled, when we are commemorating the Love of our infinitely-dear and loving Saviour, who died for us, to reconcile us foolish Enemies, us undone Rebels, to God !

And since Christ has given us his own precious Body and Blood, to be our Food and Sustainance in that Banquet of Souls, we should moreover find

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find in our Hearts to spare something of our Substance, to feed and cherish the Bodies of the Poor and Hungry. If we do not relieve the Helpless and the Miserable, as we have Opportunity and Power, we shall be interpreted to oppress them. But, if we do, we shall be counted to have done it to Christ, who tells us himself, *inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye did it unto me.* Every Thing therefore puts us in Mind of Charity, both in giving and forgiving.

But I am briefly to take notice of the Motive wherewith our Apostle here inforces this Duty of fervent Charity, which is, because *it covers the Multitude of Sins.*

Now, whether this is to be understood of covering the Sins of other People, as is the Opinion even of some *Papish* Commentators of best Note, by converting Sinners to Righteousness, which will be the happy Occasion of God's covering, pardoning and forgiving those Persons Sins and Iniquities, and receiving them to Favour; for so the parallel Words of St. James seem to restrain the Reward of covering Sins to that particular Branch of Charity done to the Souls of Men, saying, in the very last Verse of his Epistle, *Let him know, that he who converteth the Sinner from the Error of his Ways shall save a Soul from Death, and shall bide a Multitude of Sins.* If that is the Meaning, the charitable Man is ready to practise this according as he has Influence and Authority, or meets with Probability of Success; that so he may shine hereafter as the Stars, for ever and ever. He himself also will take Care to cover the Sins of others, in one other good Respect, by passing over their Faults, forgiving and concealing them from other People, when no good Reason exacts of him the divulging. This is the Meaning of that Character, in 1 Cor. xiii. 7. *Charity beareth all*

all Things: Which is but ill-rendered in the *English*; for the original Word *stye*, signifies to *cover* and *conceal*: This is countenanced by *Prov. x. 13. Hatred stirreth up Strife, but Love covereth Sins.*

Or whether the Promise is of having our own personal Sins covered or pardoned of God; seeing it is countenanced by those Places of Scripture, which promise Forgiveness of Sins from God to those who forgive the Trespasses of others against themselves, and denies it where and when we deny the other: And there is, in other Places of Scripture, the like Encouragement given to another Branch of Charity; I mean that of *Alms-giving*, as *Prov. xvi. 6. By Mercy and Truth Iniquity is purged*; and *Dan. iv. 27. Break off your Sins by Righteousness, and your Iniquities by shewing Mercy to the Poor*, with others to the like Effect. To which may be added, though not as genuine Scripture, 3 of *Ecclus x. Alms shall make Atonement for Sins, as Water quencheth the Flames of Fire.* This, indeed, may be a Ground and Condition, where it is practised, of Christ's expiating, and the Father's covering not only the Multitude of Sins of our Infirmary, which solely consist with a good Conscience, but of other Sins also, since Christ has so peremptorily required it, and puts the whole Issue of our final Judgment to Life or Death, according to our Performance thereof, *visiting the Sick, and the Imprisoned, &c.* The least that can be concluded from it is, that, since it will be particularly enquired into at that Day, we should be especially careful not to omit it in our Life-time; and his Apostle *St. John* says, *They who are void of this, and shut up their Bowels of Compassion, the Love of God does not dwell in that Man.* But they, who this Way love much, to them shall much be forgiven. *Cornelius*
was

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was highly favoured of God for his praying always, and giving much Alms. Vainly, therefore, does the Miser pretend to live in Charity with all the World, who cannot find in his Heart to exercise this Part of it : Vain is all his Religion ; his Sins are a Multitude indeed, and they shall never be covered, nor forgiven.

In any, or all these three several Senses, the charitable Man, in whom Charity has its *perfect Work*, shall, or will *cover a Multitude of Sins*.

I close up all with exhorting you, in a few Words, to the great Duty ensuing, of receiving the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper : That we repair to the Altar in Obedience, in Gratitude, in Love to Christ, who has *so exceedingly loved us* ; in Love to ourselves, in Love to one another ; and receive an Answer to all our Prayers, and, under full Purpose of Amendment of Life, a lively Faith and Hope, a thankful Remembrance of his Death, receive Remission of our Sins, and Re-admission into Favour with our God. There let us, with holy Vows, strengthen our Aversion to Sin, and enlarge our Disposition to every good Word and Work ; for that is the Treasure of all Goodness of Love and Charity, whence every one may take out, and make large Addition to his Stock, inasmuch as to become *rich in good Works*, and *abound more in Good-will* to every one. There our Unworthiness in committing so many Sins shall be cleansed, and done away in the Worthiness of Christ, our Sacrifice, who is the only Supply and Perfection of our Obedience, whose Merits in taking our Flesh and Infirmities will absolve us from those which unavoidably cleave to our Nature. There we may *grow up to the Stature and Fulness of Christ*, by eating that Bread which came down from Heaven under the lively Figures of Bread and Wine, to give *Life*

to the World, and Growth and Nourishment to the Soul.

Go, Christians, thither! meet your Lord and Master Christ, who is ascended into Heaven, and has appointed to meet in Spirit his Disciples at *Jerusalem*; yea, and he will be as present in his Virtues, as if he was there in Person to sit at the upper End of the Table. Then go we all thither, and receive the Pledge of his Promise, the Assistance of the Comforter, which he sent down from Heaven to our endless Comfort, as upon next *Sunday*. The Spirit of Grace will meet us there. Let us there, in the Name and Promise of Christ, beg of him Light to be *led into all Truth*. Let us beg Strength to obey his Directions in every thing, and take Counsel of his inspired Word how to lead the Life of Righteousness, obey his godly Motions, and in all Things live according to God in the Spirit, as the Verse before my Text enjoins. *God grant that all we, who call ourselves Christians, may use all Means for that End, for the Sake of Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory in the Churches, throughout all Ages, World without End.*



Whit-Sunday.

SERMON

The Nineteenth.

The Offices of the Holy Ghost.

ACTS ii. 4. Being a Portion of the Gospel for
this Day.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

THE peculiar Regards of Christians
are eminently due to this Festival;
which commemorates the Effusion
of the Holy Ghost; for as much as
that pouring-out of the Spirit finished and com-
pleted the Christian Institution, and ratified and
proclaimed to the World all the Parts and Doc-
trines, the Mysteries and Precepts of it; and
from thenceforth, God's Way of Redemption,
and his saving Health is to be *made known to all*
Nations; by the great Wonders, and joyful
Means and Consequences whereof, we, among
others, are happily become acquainted with the
Gospel of Christ, and may be sufficiently con-
vinced

vinced of its Truths, and enabled to perform the Duties it requires of us.

Were the *Jews* commanded to *keep the Feast*, this Day, and did the *Jews* observe the Command, in Memory of the *Law* once delivered to them, and to *rejoice before the Lord*, for the Fruits of the Earth bestowed upon them? How much rather are the Thanks and Praises, the Admiration and Joy of Christian Congregations annually engaged on this more joyful Day, for the Mercy of a better Covenant, and an incomparably easier Law, so signally proclaimed from Heaven; freed from the hard Task of the other Dispensation, which *gendered unto Bondage*, but enlarged to all rational Freedom and Service, with better Promises, and aided with far greater Assistances, even of the Holy Spirit of Grace, which are, in so eminent a Manner, the peculiar Privilege and Claim of that Gospel of Grace and Truth, which came by *Jesus Christ*? How greatly, and reverently should we, therefore, celebrate the miraculous Powers and Communications of the Spirit, descended on this Day of Pentecost, to give Testimony and Demonstration to our Religion, (a greater than which God could not give, nor the World possibly receive) by a Miracle so strange and surprizing, that the World never saw the like; so unexceptionable, that no Cavil or Pretext of the Men of it can diminish it? *viz.* the Gift of the several kinds of Tongues then spoke in the World, descending, in Manner and Circumstances astonishing both to the Eyes and Ears of all that were present, upon the first Witnesses and Planters of the Gospel: And present there were some of most People and Languages then subject to the *Roman Power*; nay, the *Parthians* were providentially there, the then Enemies and Rivals of the *Roman Power*; that they

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they also, being Ear and Eye-Witnesses, as well as others, might without Obstruction spread it every where; and, wherever it spread, convince. Thus, when the Lord gave the Word, great was the Company of Preachers; from thenceforth the Gospel had its divine Credentials, and Confirmation before all Men, that it *came down from God*, and is the *Way of Truth*, directing to the Knowledge of his Will, in order to the everlasting Fruition of him. For the By-Standers saw (as you read) *cloven Tongues, like Fire, sitting upon the Head of every one of the Disciples of our Lord*; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake with new Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance; and every one heard them, in their own Tongue, speak Languages, one after another, which they knew nothing of the Instant before. A sedate Consideration on which stupendous Miracle is enough to ratify, and fill up all Things wanting to a reasonable Belief, and ascertain it in the utmost Firmness, and draw a ready Assent to a Religion thus attested, banishing all Wavering and Doubtfulness out of the Minds of those who meditate thereon. How ought Infidelity, after this, to be for ever dumb, and never open its Mouth, when confounded with Tongues, speaking themselves Miracles, and speaking of them?

If we have any thing to wonder at more, it is at the unreasonable Disbelief of those who hear and read such Proofs. The Voice of Heaven, so audibly speaking in the Languages and Abilities derived on this Day, so marvellously flowing in *Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power*, from a Parcel of poor, illiterate Fishermen, to the Confutation of the deepest Philosophers, and, with the strongest Evidence and plainest Simplicity, overthrowing all the Arts and Oppositions, all the

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Calumnies and Reproaches, which either *Jew* or *Gentile* had invented, or could concert against Christ and his Religion, one would think, is of Force and Authority irresistibly to silence all the past, present, and future Gain-sayers and Disputers of this World. For what Argument can, indeed, be greater? None ever can more plainly shew forth an Inspiration from above, beyond any that ever was in the World before, even in the *Jewish* Church. Never were the mighty Kings of this World so confounded by mean Things, and by Things of no Account. What could therefore produce this? Or what can be conceived to have effected it, but the manifest Power of God interesting itself in its Behalf? Never before, nor since, did the wonderful Works of God appear in greater Display of Power; all other Miracles have, at one Time or other, been pretended to by Impostors; never this by any, since the World began, without Learning or Education.

Besides, this Fulfilling of Prophecy, and Accomplishment of our Saviour's Promise, in these strange Effects and Effusions of the Holy Ghost, was cogent to have convinced any beholding *Jew*, that Christ, who so exactly brought to pass what he himself had foretold would come to pass not many Days afterwards, must necessarily be a true Prophet, and the very Messiah; and that by the Rules laid down in their Law, distinguishing betwixt a true and a false one, having seen the *pouring out of the Spirit on all Flesh*, spoken of by *Joel*, and only expected by them in the Days of the Messiah, so plainly verified. All Prejudices against the Meanness of our Saviour's Birth and Education were, by this Event, fully satisfied and set right; his glorious Ascension, in Triumph and great Splendour, was amply sufficient to take off the Ignominy and Reproach of his Sufferings,

Sufferings, and shewed, as clear as the Day-light, that his Kingdom was not of this World ; that the long expected Messiah of the House and Lineage of *David* was sure enough not to be any longer a temporal, but a spiritual King ; and that it was merely owing to their Prejudices and Mistakes, which otherwise construed the Prophecies relating to him.

Nay, it must be owned, before this Day's Illumination, the very Apostles of Christ themselves had wrong Notions of the Nature of his Kingdom. Whilst he was visibly present amongst them they were comforted by his Company and Promises, encouraged by his Example, and instructed by his heavenly Lessons ; but still they persuaded themselves to expect *one Day* great Promotions to temporal Dignities in his Kingdom ; and, for the Preference, they began to rival one another, dreaming of the Commencement of that Scene, even after his Resurrection from the Dead, as appears by that Passage, *Lord wilt thou at this Time restore the Kingdom to Israel ?* But now he was ascended up *far above all Heavens*, they, in great Dejection, seemed to have given all over for lost ; the Bridegroom was now taken away ; Sorrow and Heaviness took Possession of them ; till, upon this Day, the Mission of the Holy Ghost, the promised Comforter, dispelled it in Plenitude of Joy, Consolation, and Peace in believing, illuminated their Understandings, *brought all Things to their Remembrance, whatever their Lord and Master did or said to them ;* till they perfectly knew the Meaning of every Tittle, and received Language on a sudden to utter and declare it to all Nations under Heaven to whom they preached : And what was thus promulged, like Lightning, by Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power, over the whole *Roman Empire* before their

their own Decease, or the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, could not any otherwise, humanly speaking, have been effected in many Ages. They then bore Witness of the glad Tidings of the Resurrection to every Concourse of People, who durst not have attested, or preached the same in a Corner, before their Tongues received the supernatural Impulse, and their Hearts intrepid Courage and Constancy to maintain it to the last Drop of their Blood. Even their Sufferings for his Name's Sake (bitter and various though they were) gave them Joy; for *to die, with them, in so glorious a Cause, was Gain*, and to be found worthy to be reproached falsely was their greatest Honour: Their admirable Fortitude, and patient enduring with Gladness, also gave mighty Proof and Testimony of their preaching the Doctrine of the Kingdom; and a Power of Miracles was thus, moreover, communicated, from this Source, to do more and greater, than even *Jesus* their Lord and Master did; for, as he promised to invest them with, so he actually invested and enabled them, not only to receive, but to give and communicate to others, by Imposition of Hands, the Gift of the Holy Ghost, and all the other extraordinary Abilities consequent thereupon, as long as the Exigencies of the Church required. Greater were the Works of the Apostles, in this Respect, as being more than our Lord's, who preached but in one Language, in one Country: They did more Miracles in different Languages and Countries, and to the Conversion of greater Multitudes; they were variously endowed by divine Power, *some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists*, to serve the Uses, and make up the Harmony and Beauty of the Building of Christ; and that the different Capacities of the several Members might harmoniously, and lovingly conspire together,

ther, to serve the whole Occasions of the Body of Christ.

And the same Holy Ghost which inspired and endowed them with all those marvellous Powers, gave them no less marvellous Success in the Ministrations of them. They had no Reason now to lament their Master Christ's Absence, since he had sent so kind, nay, and so exceeding powerful a Vicegerent in his Stead. They had, by this heavenly Aid, received more than an Equivalent for the bodily Departure of him, who was gone away only in Kindness, and a Proof at the same time of his Godhead, since he could be still so powerfully present in Spirit, though absent in Body so far off; under Direction of which heavenly Agent deputed in his room, they, the Apostles, proceeded to collect, to depute others to govern, guide, and instruct that Church which was purchased by his Blood, over which the Spirit of Truth has promised to watch with constant Safeguard and Presidence, and to be with it also in Protection, even unto the End; till this military, mortal State shall put on Immortality, and become triumphant in Glory.

However, be it noted that the extraordinary Effusions and miraculous Effects of the Spirit were necessary only for the first Establishment and Confirmation of Christianity; for this Reason St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiv. 22. says, with particular Emphasis, of this Miracle of Tongues, that it was *for Signs, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not*; and, consequently, for that very Reason why those great Miracles were so plentifully displayed at the first, they ought to have ceased afterwards; for had they continued still, they would cease to be Miracles by growing common Things, and so would have destroyed themselves. Upon this Account, as well as for the scandalous Falshood and

and Imposition, the *Romish* Church has a great deal to answer, for their doing very great Dishonour to the true ratifying those Miracles of our Religion, and prejudicing those that are not Christians from believing them, by their Monkish, detected Pretences to the same Power residing still in their Church. These Things may be taken in as the first Grounds of our Thanks and Joy on this Day. But more especially, in the

2d Place, blessed be God the Father, praised for ever be God the Son, and the blessed Spirit of Grace, we have constant, permanent Reason in which we are bound with *St. Paul* to rejoice, and give Thanks, *because God has chosen us to Salvation, through Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth*, 2 *Thess.* ii. 13. The ordinary, gentle Operations of the Holy Ghost are as necessary to us now, as the extraordinary, astonishing ones were at the first settling of our Religion; for all our Spiritual Powers and Abilities of acceptable Performance are aided by Influences from that Foundation of Blessings, which was liberally opened and poured out, at this Time, upon all that the Lord our God should call to that Knowledge of his Son: Hence commences the Claim and Title of us Christians to those sufficient Communications and Assistances from the Holy Spirit to bless our Concurrence, and enable us by quick Repentance, and sincere Obedience to observe, and do all that Christ has commanded us.

This Spirit is stiled the *Spirit of Promise*, which now being fulfilled, is become the actual Privilege and Possession of the Gospel. As the Use of a Seal is to distinguish something as a Peculiar, and mark it for one's own; so we Christians are, in Scripture, * said to be *sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the Day of Redemption*; so
the

* *Eph.* iv. 30.

so the Knowledge and Revelation of divine Things, that proceeded from the Spirit, are peculiarly the Christian's Privilege. The Holy Ghost tells us, *Acts ii. 38.* that *the Promise was not only to the Jews, and their Children, but to as many afar off as the Lord our God should call.*

If we understand Prophecy, in St. Paul's Signification of it, as interpreting Scripture, where he prefers it (*1 Cor. xiv.*) to *Gift of Tongues*; then that Passage which St. Peter cites out of *Joel* concerning the *last Days*, or the Days of the Messiah, that God would *pour his Spirit upon all Flesh, and Sons and Daughters should prophesy, and young Men see Visions, and old Men dream Dreams* signifies, that as Prophecies of old came in that manner to several, so the Knowledge of interpreting the Scripture of the Old Testament, relating to the Messiah, would be plain and obvious to all Flesh, *i. e.* all Particulars of the human Race, Young, Old, Male and Female; and so that Spirit of Knowledge is poured out as plentifully upon the Christian World as *the Waters cover the Sea.*

Though there is Reason to conceive, that some of the wise Heathens were directed and guided into many Truths by the gracious Favour of the divine Spirit, especially since they had, several of them, so clear an Apprehension of their Need of, and Dependance on its Assistance. *Nunquam Mens bona sine Deo, i. e.* "no-body can be good without God," was the Opinion of one. Another argues, "If Arts less excellent in their Nature, and less useful in their End, are owing to God, how much more is Virtue, which is the divine Guide and Comfort of human Life?" In Reliance, on which superior Guidance and Assistance Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and others, were eminent for Prayer and

and Supplication to God. And though it is also most undoubtedly true, that many holy Men and Women in the Patriarchal Age, and after the Law, enjoyed signal Guidance and Influence from the same Spirit, still it is to be remembered and distinguished, that neither those, nor these, had any Right to claim it by way of Covenant or Engagement from God, as we Christians now have: The Communications then were neither general nor regular, but to some particular Persons, at some particular Times, according to the mere Pleasure and good Favour of the Spirit, *which flowed then where it listed*; but now God has made us over a Right to it, and we can boldly claim it upon the Foot of a divine Promise, which is immutable, *Luke xi.* Upon our asking (in Christ's Name) God has promised to give the Holy Spirit, *i. e.* the Effects of it. Wherever are the good Effects of God's Word, there the Word of God *abideth*; and if any *lack Wisdom*, we are hither directed to *ask*, and seek it of God, *who upbraideth none*, but will perform it to all, till we, by our much Obstinacy and Iniquities, abuse his Admonitions, slight his Checks and Suggestions, quench his Motions, and force him to retire.

We are in our Infancy baptized in the Name of the Holy Ghost, that great Confirmer of our Religion; and our corrupt Nature, in the same Sense that it is corrupt, impure, foul, or filthy, in the same it is washed, cleansed, purified, or sanctified, by *the washing of Water, and the Word*, as St. Paul says in one Place, *Eph. v.* in another, *Tit. iii. 4.* by the *Laver of Regeneration, and Renewal of the Holy Ghost*; and when we have sinned, and become Fools in our Years of Discretion, we are again regenerated by Repentance: If we obey the Instigations of this our sacred Friend,

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Friend, that grieves at our Folly, we are *born again by the incorruptible Seed of the Word of God, become renewed in the Spirit, or Temper of our Minds, and new Creatures, according to God, in Righteousness and Holiness.*

God is said to give a *new Heart, and new Spirit*; yet in *Ezek. xviii. 3.* he requires us to *cast away our Transgressions*, in order to *make ourselves new Hearts, and new Spirits.* So Repentance is said to be the *Gift of God*, just as he gives us (upon our Prayers) this Day our daily Bread, that is, never otherwise than with the Concurrence of our own Labour. God, in Scripture, is often said to give a Thing, when those effectual Means, through the Application and Concurrence of our Endeavours, would certainly bestow the Benefit upon us. Thus the Father is said, *John vi. 32.* to give the Jews the true Bread from Heaven; yet they who believed it received it: It was not received by as many as did not.

By this Spirit which is given us, is *the Love of God shed abroad in our Hearts*; and, as the Effect of God's Word is frequently stiled the Grace of God; so, to be under Grace, and to be led by the Spirit, is, in a great Measure, answered, when we are led by the written Word. He is also our Advocate upon Earth, as Christ is in Heaven: He tries, moreover, all Means to save us, that we may enjoy the Benefit of the Redemption which Christ hath wrought for us: He, by the divine Word of Scripture, pleads with us, and for us, against the Devil, the *Prince of this World*, the *Accuser of the Brethren*, and the *Father of Lyes*, who would first seduce us into Iniquity, and then drive us into Despair: He, moreover, advocates and maintains our Cause against a wicked World, and the Persecutions of it; he brings Arguments and Motives to Mind, and gives

gives them true Light and Efficacy in Time of Temptation; *helps our Infirmities; intercedes for us, by teaching us how to pray and intercede, and for what; making Intercession with Groans that cannot be uttered, for Things that we most need; wings our Devotion with Trust and Fervency that will be regarded, and gives us a greater Boldness that we shall be accepted, through the Merits of Christ: All those Things does the good and blessed Spirit for us, that so we may come boldly to the Throne of Grace, to obtain Mercy, and find Grace in Time of Need.*

Besides, he is our Comforter no less under the Infirmities and Weakness of corrupt Nature, and under all Difficulties and Discouragements in the Way of our Duty; and the God of all Consolation administers Comfort and Consolation to his Servants, under the Sufferings and Afflictions of this miserable World. He *girds us with Gladness, when beset with Troubles; and instils the Oil of it into our Souls, when they are disquieted within us; and the Light, the Refreshment, and Amendment that they receive, makes them think it good for them that they were in Trouble.* The Cloud and the Darkness are soon dispelled, by the joyous, bright Expectations he is able to instil on our Spirits; and the lively Representation of the Crowns and Glories of the other World, makes us think, in earnest, the Sufferings and Reproaches of this to be *but for a Moment, not to be compared to them.* And that affords something of the Taste of these reviving Felicities, when the Bitterness of Sorrow is upon us, to cheer our Hearts, and erect our Heads: Then it is present to overflow with internal Comforts and Peace, when the *Waters of Affliction were ready to go even over our Souls, and drown our Hopes.* There the An-chor

chor of our Hope saves us in the Nick of Time, which he does not suffer the Faithful to quit.

He is also farther, as he is the Spirit of Truth, *our Teacher* to lead us into it, by the Ways of a Man, through the Means of Reason and Argument suited to our natural Capacities.

This Author and Inditer of holy Truth admonishes us farther to adhere to it in our Conversations; to *bate all Hypocrisy, Fraud, and Lying*; not to be ashamed of Truth, nor afraid to own it at any Time: It directs us how to *try the Spirit*, and the many Pretences to it, by bringing them to that Record of the Spirit, that unerring Rule of Truth, the Scripture, from which all that deviate are false and counterfeit, are not of God, but from the Spirit of Enthusiasm and Delusion.

He ministers likewise to us in the Character of being our *Monitor*, by which he stands at our right Hand, and watches over us to do us Good; inspires good Thoughts, excites good Purposes, suggests wholesome Counsels and Expedients; by an imperceptible but pleasing Method, draws our Wills; kindles Love and Resolution, and throws in Cheerfulness upon our Endeavours: When we are less tractable, he importunes and struggles with us, and makes all Efforts to recover us to Safety and Happiness, and bring us off victorious in all our Trials, unless we resolve with ourselves to be conquered, and become Slaves to Sin and *Satan*: He pursues the Sinner with unwearied Diligence, whispers often his Danger and Guilt to him, at Seasons when his *still Voice* is most likely to be regarded, expostulating the unkind Usage and Repulses wherewith he, the best of Friends, is treated; nor leaves him at last till he is pass'd Recovery by any Methods of Persuasion, and then gives him up with Grief, as a tender Father who despairs of a reprobate Son.

But

But, if his gracious Impulses and importunate Persuasions happen to be effectual to make the Sinner see the *Error of his Ways*, the foul Ingratitude he has been guilty of, and the Punishment he has incurred by his many Sins and Provocations, so as to become heartily ashamed and sorrowful, and firmly resolved against them, and in Virtue of those Resolutions, actually sets about to change his bad Course of Life, it becomes a Joy to the Holy Ghost, and Matter of Rejoicing to the Holy Angels? No Encouragement is wanting; but all Strength ready at Hand, for asking, to enable him to keep those Resolves, and farther him with continual Help and Favour in all his Doings; which, in Concurrence with his Watchfulness, is powerful to baffle all the Powers of Iniquity, and render him *more than Conqueror* over them; and, if he will be but constant to obey his godly Motions, no Harm shall happen unto him; and, as his Resolutions grow stronger by Vigilance and daily Repentance, new Thoughts, new Desires and Aims, new Pleasures and Joys inspire his Mind, and change his inner Man into another Sort of Creature than he was before. Now the Bias on his Inclinations is happily changed to that which is good, and well-pleasing to God, from running greedily, as it did before, to that which is evil: Now he has a high spiritual Gust, and more lively Sentiment of the divine Promises and Rewards of Bliss, and of the dreadful Punishments which he has escaped; both which he set at nought before; and he is now so much *another Man*, from what he was before, as if he had a new Being given him, acting by a different Principle, and by Rules and Motives so directing his Actions to Aims so different: Hence the metaphorical Expressions in Scripture of *Regeneration, new Heart, new Spirit, created in Christ Jesus,*

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Jesus, *new Creatures born of God, and Sons of God, dead to Sin, and alive to God*; and to all which, as our own Endeavours are indispensably required to concur, it demonstrates, that those Metaphors are not to be taken in that Amplitude, as to infer the Irresistibleness of God's Grace, but as strong figurative Expressions, representing a State worse than that of Sleep, out of which at other Times Man is exhorted to *arise and awake*; and now the Fruits of the Spirit will abundantly grow from him in a good Conversation, a sincere Obedience and Love to God in *all Goodness, Righteousness and Truth, in Love, Peace, Long-suffering, Benignity, Meekness, Faith, Temperance, Purity*; and *whatever is lovely, and of good Report*, will be added to perfect the Work.

What a happy and what a wise Man is this? What a blessed Change is here, from the Paths of Misery, and Death, not to be described, to a Condition and Capacity of Life and Happiness incomprehensible for Greatness of Felicity? And this may be the Case and Change of every one of us, my Brethren, if we do not obstruct it by our Impenitency, and become Haters of our own Happiness. May every one, who have this Day, or shall upon the next Opportunity resign themselves up at the blessed Sacrament to the Conduct of the Spirit, to be led and governed by it hereafter, be thus strengthened, thus established, thus protected and defended, so taught, so admonished, so comforted. For all these kind Offices and Assistances, without which we are nothing and can do nothing, proceed from the Bounties of that eternal Spirit.

If not only the extraordinary Abilities and Energies bestowed on the Apostles descended from him, but all our ordinary Powers and Capacities of doing Good depend upon him also, how can

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we sufficiently admire and adore that Treasure of Power and Goodness? or rejoice enough in the Communications of them? Seeing every Virtue is partly his Gift and Benefaction, we cannot too much love and praise God the Giver: Since he is our Comfort and Support in our Troubles, we ought to be as grateful as we can to such a Friend.

Our Repentance is his Gift, and all our Progress in Holiness is his Blessing upon our Endeavours. The Psalmist, inspired by him, witnesses that *it is not in Man that walketh to direct his Steps*, Psal. xxxvii. 23. and the Steps of every good Man are ordered by the Lord.

Though we should of ourselves apprehend and know our Duty, yet, without his effective Concurrence, we shall still remain heartless and backward to perform it; our Spirit and Reason may be willing, but the *Flesh is weak*, and hard to be prevailed with: To perform that which is good, we find not in ourselves, though we acknowledge the Law to be holy, just, and good. All the Reason that is in Man is not able, of itself, to secure us against the subtil Approaches of the spiritual Enemies of our Soul, if the divine Assistance does not join, which has the Power and the Awe over Devils.

It would be impious Presumption, and fruitless Hope, in any Christian, to think he can do God acceptable Service out of his own mere Store and Strength, if he does not first pray and desire his Imperfections to be succoured and seconded by the perfecting Graces of the Spirit, and the *Unction from above*; for we are not sufficient to do any Thing that is enjoined, till we obtain that heavenly Assistance, which we are commanded to ask in order to it.

If so; how impiously and irreligiously do those proud-spirited ones disregard the Benefit of the Spirit

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Spirit and Grace, and his inward Assistances, the necessary Means of their Salvation, who value and magnify nothing but Reason, and the Operations of that false Guide? How much therefore are we, who own our Dependance on it, obliged to be thankful for such an inestimable Privilege of the Gospel, which empowers our Feebleness both to eschew Evil, and do our Duty?

But would it not be an ill Instance of our Gratitude, to be very curious in searching after the Manner of those divine Operations upon us, which we can never be able to comprehend till we are more acquainted with the Nature of that august Spirit, and of our own Souls? The Effects are only visible and certain, the particular Way and Manner how they are produced is imperceptible and uncertain to us; as the Effects of the Wind, to which the other is compared by our Lord, and whose mighty rushing Violence began the Wonders of this Day, are as plainly known and apparently confessed, as that there is such a Thing as Wind; yet no Man can tell whither it goes, or whence it comes: And we may as well deny that the Wind is not the true Cause in one Case, because the Manner of its operating is unknown, as disbelieve the Spirit is the true Cause in the other, merely upon the Account of the Difficulty of perceiving the Manner of its Working; as, on the other Hand, wherever we see the Effects and Fruits of the Spirit, we may be as certain of the Spirit's operating in that Man, as of the Existence and Action of the Wind by its sensible Effects.

Better does it become us, in all Humility (which is the Inference I would draw to our Practice, and to make what has been said beneficial to us, *i. e.* that we do our Part to cultivate the Seeds of Virtue, which the Holy Ghost, by that incorruptible Seed, the Word of God, has sowed in us) that

we improve and nourish them with all that Diligence and Circumspection, which is required on our Part to make them grow to Fruit, or come to Perfection. We must do something, or else God will do nothing: Though all that we do, without him, will be nothing; yet whatever we do in and through such Assistance will be successful, and we shall be blessed in our Deed. His Blessing, like the Rain, is ready to wait and fructify our Endeavours. All the Means of reading or hearing the Word, of Prayer, and receiving the Sacrament, are but Co-workers with him, and without his Influence will not be effectual; yet he will not dispense to us those necessary Influences without the due Application to those Ordinances, because he has enjoined them as Conditions, and appointed them as the stated only Conveyances through which alone we ought to hope to enjoy them.

Our diligent Observance and Endeavours engage the gracious Aids of the Spirit to come in to our Help; because it is as repugnant to the Mercy and Goodness of God to suffer sincere Performances to miscarry without it, as it would be unreasonable that the slothful should succeed and be assisted: We are commanded and encouraged to *work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, for that very Reason and Motive, because God *works in us both to will and do*; his Working does not excuse, but supposes ours, and makes it more necessary. By this Means we keep our Liberty and Reason, and we have only left a Choice whether we will be miserable or not. None ought to presume from hence; since his own Working will not of itself produce Virtue, or discharge Duty as it ought, if deserted of the assisting, perfecting Grace of God: Therefore *be that thinketh he standeth, let him take Heed lest he fall.*

None

None ought to despair, on the other Hand, and be discouraged with the Difficulty of our Duty ; seeing we have an almighty Aid to carry us through, if we are but true to observe those Cautions he has given us : *We can do all Things through Christ, that strengthens us ; and greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the World.* We have only, in our several Stations, to use our best Care and conscientious Diligence, and we may depend upon him who will *never leave nor forsake* such Care : For the Rest ; he has promised to supply it, he is obliged to perform it. If we have but Two Talents committed to us, and improve them after this Manner, they will entitle us to *enter into the Joy of our Lord*, as well as the Improvement of Ten.

We must, in the last Place, as a Matter of the highest Consequence, take most solemn Heed not to provoke the good Spirit by our obstinate Continuance in Sin, so that he forsake us as Incorrigible : He *waits long to be gracious* ; but there is a Time beyond which he will not be gracious, but will *mock when our Calamity comes* : In which desperate State, we shall be immutably rejected by God, both of Pardon and Assistance. We can only prevent it in Time, by taking Care not to quench this Spirit by a sinful Life.

But I conclude with my Hopes, that my present Text, *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost*, is fulfilled this Day, in the Ears and Experience of many, as many as have received (and will be fulfilled to as many as shall receive next Opportunity) the blessed Sacrament, the Food of the Spirit ; *filled* I say, if we have duly partaken in Faith, in Charity, in Repentance, in Resolves to lead a better Life, with all that Portion of Graces, that are needful for our Circumstances. By the due and devout Participation of this, as

great, or greater Blessings and Benefits may descend upon our Souls, than formerly did upon this Day, with mighty Signs and Wonders, with strange Gifts of Tongues. For, *though we speak with the Tongue of Men and Angels*, it is possible for all that, as the Apostle says, to become *Cast-aways* at last, and *fall short of the Glory of God*, unless we are also endowed with the Graces of Charity and Goodness, which are no where so plentifully reminded upon our Practice as in the Sacrament. I end all with that Collect of our Church, *Grant to us Lord, we beseech thee, the Spirit to think and do always such Things as be rightfoul, that we who cannot do any Thing that is good without thee, may be enabled to live according to thy Will, through Jesus Christ, To whom, &c.*

For Trinity Sunday.

SERMON

The Twentieth.

The Duty of believing the Blessed Trinity.

JOH. iii. 15, which concludes the Gospel of the Day.

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.

MOST wisely has the Church, for many Centuries, appointed this great Festival to succeed the Sunday next following that of the Commemoration of the Holy Ghost's Descent upon the Disciples, and his free Communications thence in great Privileges ensuing upon all true Believers; since it is by the Assistance of the blessed Spirit, one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, that we are enabled to believe the great and sacred Mystery which this Day presents to our Thoughts; since we must owe to his Grace, which we trust will not be wanting, to impress more lively upon our Hearts those suitable Apprehensions, and grateful

Returns of Thanks and Service, with which we ought to celebrate this Day; which points out to our Meditation the great Things that the Triune God-head has done for his Creature Man; particularly in redeeming him from a State of deserved Misery, to a Capacity of endless Happiness; a Work both in Mercy, in Wonder and in Glory, far surpassing that of creating him first into Being.

As the second Person in the Trinity, the great and merciful Redeemer, the Author and Finisher of that Faith which must save us, was conceived into this World, and united to human Nature by the holy Ghost; so can no Man, till he is enlightened by, and united to *Jesus* by the Spirit, say that *Jesus* is the Lord, according to the Sense of an inspired Apostle: For it is his divine Influence that gives due Attention, and a dutiful Disposition of Mind to receive and embrace this saving Verity. We are privileged in being permitted to consider, how much each Person in the adorable Trinity was concerned in transacting the wondrous Affair of Man's Redemption, which was hid from Ages and Generations; for it was but imperfectly discovered to the patriarchal Age; it was not fully revealed in the Old Testament, under the Dispensation of Types and Shadows; nor did it clearly appear till he, in Fulness of Time, appeared in the World, who is the *Way*, the *Truth*, and the *Life*; neither was it sufficiently comprehended by the Disciples themselves during our Lord's Abode upon Earth, though he gave them, as it were, a sensible Demonstration of the three Persons of the Godhead, when, after his Baptism, he, one of the divine Persons, ascended up out of the Water, and the Holy Ghost, another, descended visibly on him like a Dove; and lo! at the same Time, the audible Voice of the Father from Heaven,

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ven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, hear him.* Nor did they conceive it rightly, by other Proofs that he gave them of it in the Course of his Doctrine; no, not by that plainest and most important Evidence, which he laid down to all Christians, both of the Trinity and Equality of the Persons in the Godhead, when he instituted and commanded them, and their Successors, the Form of making Christians to the End of the World, by baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Notwithstanding this Mystery entered not into their Creed till the holy Spirit, after our Lord's Ascension, came down from Heaven in a visible Display of himself, to bring all Things to the Apostles Remembrance which our Lord had said to them, and to illuminate their Understandings in the deep Things of God, and then the Three which bare Witness on Earth, gave signal Testimony and Illustration of the Three which bare Record in Heaven, which all agreed in one, i. e. this one Thing, viz. That there were three Persons and but one God. These mysterious Things, says the Apostle, were revealed unto us by the holy Spirit. 1 Cor. ii. 10.

I now proceed to what I propose from the Text, which is, to lay down a true and brief Account of the Subordination of the Son to the Father, and of the Holy Ghost to both: This shall be my

I. Undertaking at present; because I perceive that Misconceptions, about this, have been the Ground and Occasion of Disputes, and of leading Men into dangerous Conclusions, repugnant to the Word of God, the Rule of our Faith.

II. I will shew why Faith, in the divine Mysteries revealed in Scripture, is so necessary to a Christian's Salvation.

III. What

III. What practical Influence the Belief of the Mystery of this Day ought to have on us.

I. Let us lay down a true and brief Account of the Subordination of the Son to the Father, and of the Holy Ghost to both, to the Quieting of Disputes; which, I think, may fairly be done, by admitting of these Things.

That the divine Essence and Substance of the Godhead is so ~~one~~ that it admits of Distinction, and so admits of Distinction as still to retain its Unity.

That, as the God-head is one, so we call him God, the Deity, the divine Nature, and other Names of the same Signification; as he is distinguished, so we call him Trinity, Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

That the Subordination of the sacred Persons in the Holy Trinity proceeds not from any Inequality of Essence, but from the Inequality of their personal Properties and Relations; for as to their Essence they are all of them God, *i. e.* infinite in Being, Perfections, and essential Attributes; and being infinite, they must be all equal; there being no such Thing as more or less in Infinity; and then, being equal in Essence, they must necessarily be equal in Power and Dominion, Majesty and Glory; and consequently, as such, are no Way subject or subordinate to one another: But, as to their personal Properties, it cannot be denied but that there is an Inequality and Subordination: For the Father, who begot, must in that Respect be superior to the Son, who was begotten; and the Holy Ghost, who proceeded, must in that Respect be inferior to the Father and Son from whom he proceeded; and upon this Inequality their Subordination is founded: For, as there is a stated Number in the Trinity, by which the sacred Persons

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sons are determined to three, so there is also a stated Order by which they are ranked into a first, second and third; which Order is not made by mutual Consent, or arbitrary Constitution, but founded in the Nature of those personal Properties, by which they are distinguished from one another: For, as the Father, who is the Fountain of the Godhead to the Son, must be first in Order of Nature; and as the Son, together with the Father, was the Fountain of the Godhead to the Holy Ghost, and therefore must be second to the Father, and, in Order of Nature, before the Holy Ghost; so the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, must of the three be, in Order of Nature, the third; for so the Scripture expressly asserts, that *he proceeded from the Father*, and also that *he is the Spirit of the Son*, and *the Spirit of Christ*, and *the Spirit of Jesus Christ*.

So that though, as to their Godhead, they are all equal and coeternal together, yet, in Order of Nature, and in Respect of their personal Properties, the third is Inferior, the second Superior, and the first Supreme; and, being unequal in those personal Properties by which they stand related to each other, it is very reasonable that, according to these their personal Inequalities, they should be subordinate to one another, and consequently, that the Father, who is the Fountain of the Divinity, should be Supreme in the Divine Monarchy, and that the Son, who was begotten of him, should minister to him, and that the Holy Ghost, who proceeded from the Father and the Son, should minister to both; and accordingly, in all its external Actions and Administrations, this has ever been the Oeconomy of the Holy Trinity, for the Father to act by the Ministry of the Son, and the Son by the Ministry of the Holy Ghost.

In

In this Method of Subordination, the Godhead has always proceeded in its Transactions with the World; and that more especially and remarkably in the great Affair of Mediating for, and Redeeming of Mankind: And, in this Respect, this Subordination of the sacred Persons seems farther to be founded in mutual Agreement between them; in which the Son agreed with the Father that, in case he would be so far reconciled to rebellious Mankind as to grant them a Covenant of Mercy, and therein, among other Blessings, to promise them his Holy Spirit, he himself would assume our Nature, and therein not only treat with us personally, in order to the reducing us to our bounden Allegiance, but also die a Sacrifice for our Sins; upon which Agreement the Father, long before the Son had actually performed his Part of it, even from our first Apostasy, granted his Spirit, in Part, to Mankind before our Saviour came into the World; and afterwards in full Measure by Way of rightful Privilege to Believers, when the Procurer of all our Blessings had made Satisfaction by his Death, and ascended to his Father. And the Holy Spirit was granted to this End, that, under the Son, he should mediate with Men, in order to the reducing them to their due Subjection to the Father; for all that heavenly Influence, which the Holy Ghost *sheds forth* upon the Minds of Men, is wholly mediatorial in God's Behalf, and in order to reconciling Mens Minds to him; and to those Believers only who are regenerated by his Influence, will the Merits and Satisfaction of Christ be of Efficacy to save their Souls.

And this Grace of the Spirit as a *Seed incorruptible*, is that which must *quicken the Spirit of Man*, and conceive him a-new, a Son of God, and Member of Christ; so that Christ, having Man's Flesh, and Man having Christ's Spirit, there

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is an open Passage and mutual Imputation, whereby Sin and Wrath were conveyed to Christ from Man; which Seed of the Holy Ghost first figureth in us the Image of Christ slain or crucified; through a lively Faith, and then reneweth in us the Image of God, in Holiness and Charity.

I have been the shorter in this Account of the Subordination of the Persons of the sacred Trinity, because it is one of the deepest and most speculative Points in Divinity, and therefore not of general Use; and, as it infringes nothing of the Unity of the Godhead, nor of the Coeternity, Coequality and Consubstantiality of the three Persons, is that Christian Verity, and the Result of that sound Doctrine which is delivered in Holy Scripture, and embraced by the Church of God, and is perfectly agreeable and concordant to the *Albanasian* Creed, which is to instruct our Faith to believe in but one undivided Essence and Substance of the Godhead, though, for our more distinct Conception of this Essence, we distinguish the several Subsistencies in it by calling them different Persons. But still, that this Plurality of Persons does not infer a Plurality of Beings, is manifest from hence, that the Name of each Person has a necessary Respect to the other two: If I mention the Father, I include the Son; if the Son, I include the Father; if the Spirit, I must unavoidably be understood to refer to some whose Spirit this is, and so imply Father and Son both: And, as in all three there is but one Essence, so but one Power, one Goodness, one Blessedness from, and by, and in whom whatever else is blessed receives its Blessedness. And this, which is the Sum and Substance of all this holy undivided Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, is to be worshipped and *believed by all Christians with the*
Heart

Heart unto Righteousness, and confessed with their Mouth unto Salvation: Which brings me to the

II^d Proposal, to shew how Faith in the divine Mysteries revealed by God becomes so much a Duty upon Christians; particularly that in the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, is most fundamentally necessary, because it is the Gate and Entrance into that Religion by which we hope to be saved, it is that which baptises us Christians, and agreed by all, that That Baptism is invalid where the Words of our Saviour's Initiation into the Trinity are omitted; and, consequently, is of that essential Importance, that there is no being Christians without it.

Particularly also (which is included in the other) Faith in Christ, the eternal Son of God, is absolutely and indispensably necessary to the being of a Christian, and to any Hopes of his Salvation. So very many other Places, as well as my Text affirm, that *whosoever believeth in him shall have everlasting Life*: And other Passages utterly exclude those from it who *believe not*. Now Faith in Christ is plainly nothing else, “but believing and embracing his Gospel; and all Things contained therein, concerning God, ourselves, or another World, upon Christ's Authority; and more especially believing what he therein declares concerning his being Christ, the Son of God, who died, rose again, ascended to God's right Hand to return again to judge the World, and that, for the Sake of his Death to expiate Sins, God will be reconciled to Sinners, upon their true Repentance and sincere Obedience.”

This is the Foundation of eternal Life, which God hath laid; and it standeth sure, and he that embraces it, and lives according to it, shall enter therein. But our Faith embracing is first and principally required, because it is the Ground and Principle

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Principle of all virtuous and godly living, and is itself as much a Virtue, and an Act of Obedience due from us to God, as Amendment of our Lives, or any particular Duty of a holy Life: For to run all Religion into Morality and a good Life, in Opposition to Faith, is a reducing Christianity to Heathenism.

The Truth is, our right Faith is so much the Ground-work of holy and righteous Obedience, that it is for Want of being more Orthodox in our Creed, and of giving more hearty Credit to what we profess to believe in, that we are not more punctual Observers of the Commandments; which should convince us of the Necessity of a sound Belief, since a false one, that is repugnant to the plain Word of God, may be our eternal Ruin: For our Belief is the Tree which must bear the pleasing and acceptable Virtues and Fruit of Christian Action, and if the Tree be corrupt, the Fruit will be corrupt also; and if God will condemn us for corrupt Actions, we had Need have a Care that our Faith be not corrupted. *Whosoever believeth, hath eternal Life*; and is it not fit that, since eternal Life, which is promised in the Gospel, is infinitely above all our Deservings, that we should entirely give Credence to the blessed Words and Truths it informs us of Christ, as it has revealed them unto us, lest we forfeit the Promise by doubting, by correcting, or calling them in Question?

Now to make it farther appear, that it is not an indifferent Thing, what Belief or Opinions a Christian entertains; which is a dangerous Mistake that has too much prevailed in the World; and also, that we are under strict Obligation of embracing and enquiring into the Truths of God, that must direct our Lives and save us; I will shew

shew, that our Faith is both a moral Virtue, and also our most essential Christian Duty.

1. It is a moral Virtue, inasmuch as it is a natural Homage which the Understanding or the Will pays to God, in receiving and assenting to what he reveals to Man, upon his bare Word and Authority: It is a comely and a proper Humiliation of ourselves, as Creatures, and a bounden Glorification of God our Maker: It is an Humiliation of ourselves, as it implies a dutiful Submission of our own Reason and Understanding to the Divine, that God is wiser than Man, even his Foolishness wiser than all Philosophy: And a Glorification of God, as it is a Confession and Acknowledgment of his infallible Truth and Veracity; for Faith gives Testimony to the Truth of God, according to that of St. *John*, *He that believeth, his Testimony hath set to his Seal, that God is true*, Chap. iii. 33. of 1 Ep. As, on the contrary, Unbelief dishonours and reproaches him as one that is false and deceitful, and not fit to be credited, according to what the same Apostle says, *He that believeth not God, hath made him a Lyar*, Chap. v. 10. of that Ep. This is the proper Sin and Wickedness of Infidelity; and was the Sin of *Adam*, before he broke the positive Command of God, in eating the forbidden Fruit. And in the other consists the moral Virtue of Faith, which, though as to the Exercise and explicit Act of it, it supposes a Revelation, yet it has its Ground and Foundation in Natural Religion, as being as much a natural Duty which we owe to God, as to love him, or to fear him, or any Thing else.

2dly, It is most apparently a Christian Virtue, as being a Duty so indispensibly and especially required in the Gospel, and an Act of Christian Humility, submitting our Wills, denying our Inclinations and Interests in this World, and
where

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where our Reason and Understanding cannot comprehend, denying them too, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ: For indeed our Faith is not only the Corner Stone, and the Root of the Christian Life; but is itself a positive Act, and first Test and Trial of our Christian Obedience, and is as much a Work of the Gospel as any thing else is; and accordingly the Apostle tells us of the *Obedience of Faith*, Rom. xvi. 26. and our Saviour Christ himself calls it the Work of God; *this is the Work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*, Joh. vi. 29.

By the Tenour of the Gospel there seems to be a dutiful Submission and Humility incumbent on the Reason and Understanding of Man, as well as upon his Manners, and we are commanded to think soberly, and know that our Thoughts, as well as all human Things, have Bounds: And, as a Test of that Homage and Obedience, God has commanded the Belief of those Mysteries, which our Thoughts are not able to comprehend, to prove whether our rational Faculties have that Deference to his Authority, which becomes a Sense of their own short-limited Capacity, and of his incomprehensible Greatness; for what Respect do they bear to God more than to Man, if they will credit nothing that God tells them any farther than they can thoroughly understand it? For adequate and perfect Knowledge excludes that Belief, which is so much insisted on in the Gospel. And it is not improbable to affirm farther, that the blessed Mysteries of the Gospel Faith were revealed therein, as it were on Purpose to keep human Understanding low and humble, and make it sensible of its own Defects. An intemperate Curiosity, and Thirst after more Knowledge than was fit for it, was the Loss of Paradise to our

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first Parents; since which Time, the Method of regaining it in a heavenly Country, seems to be by Self-Denial, and humble Submission, and keeping within its proper Bounds.

In this Vale of Misery and Imperfection our Understanding has no Eyes, nor Ideas, to comprehend the high and lofty Things of Eternity, the full entire Notice of which is reserved for the Felicity and Entertainment of those, who shall, by their humble Belief and pure Conversation, be found worthy of the beatifick Vision; and we can never here take this Degree in Knowledge, which is so excellent, that we cannot attain unto it till this *Mortal* of ours shall *put on Immortality*.

How proud then, and haughty, and forgetful of their Distance and Reach, must the Understandings of those Men be, which would be wise at present, about these mysterious Inconceivables, above that which is written? Who would be explaining and accounting for these deep, abstruse Things of God, and be tracing out and measuring the Methods of the eternal *Logos*, and the Divinity of the Son of God, to the Innovation of our Faith in him, and that by the shallow Line of human Reason, which is as unable to fathom it, as the smallest Measure in the World is to contain the whole Ocean? What strange Work must Flesh and Blood, and the cloudy Understanding that resides in them, make, when it comes to dispute of these Things, which are so vastly high and remote above its Ken, and wholly incommensurate to its Capacity? of those revered Truths, which Flesh and Blood has not revealed, but the Spirit has given Information of them in the Words, not of Man's Wisdom? Nay, though the Glass and Telescope of Revelation is super-added to its Help, it can see no farther into these Mysteries, than that there are, and must be
such

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such Things, and that there is never in this Life any attaining a distinct and clear Perception of them: And the Reason is, because we indeed, at present, want a Faculty whereby to apprehend it; and perhaps we shall not, even in the next Life, have one super-added, large enough to conceive fully of those eternal Depths of the adorable Trinity in Unity, and the Incarnation of the Son of God, which seems to be the Entertainment and Wonder of the more exalted Angels.

Every modest Man, and Philosopher especially, may readily suppose that he wants another Faculty, or further Degree of Light, for the comprehending them: Since, by a late Discovery, his naked Eye, assisted by Instruments, can see those minute living Animals, which, without them, we could not be made to believe there were any such: And is it not very preposterous to be disturbing the Peace of the Church, and disputing about those Things which we can have no clear Idea or Comprehension of?

Much might be added of the Mischiefs and Divisions which have happened to our holy Faith, by the licentious Daringness and Curiosity of human Wisdom; and of the prodigious Unreasonableness of those Scoffers, who reject all Faith in the Mysteries of God's revealing, though they readily give up their Assent to a 1000 Mysteries and Inscrutables in the Works of Nature daily, and upon far less Motives and Grounds of Credibility, than what is presented them for the other, which are of everlasting Moment. But I now conclude with my

3d Particular, which was, to shew how this our Faith, in the holy Mystery of this Day, ought to operate upon our Practice: For as our Christian Faith is the Principle of Obedience, the Fountain of all good Living, and the Foun-

dation on which the whole Scheme of practical Religion is to be erected, inasmuch as *without Faith it is impossible* (as the Scripture says) *to please God*; yet a continual bettering of our Lives and Manners to a greater Suitableness thereto, is the End of all our believing. Faith alone will never save the most orthodox Believer, without the Deeds and Fruits of it in a virtuous and good Life; and unless it works in Repentance, in Love, and in the Instances of all good Works that are required of us in our several Stations. *The End of all our Faith*, says the Scripture, *is unto Righteousness*; and what a poor, unprofitable, and self-condemning Thing is our speculative believing, when destitute of that? For Instance, what is a Man the better for entering into the sublime Mysteries of the Trinity, and being able to dispute nicely upon that adorable Union, if, in the mean time, he continues in that Disobedience of unrighteous and impure Doings, which must necessarily subject him to the Displeasure, and the Wrath of that Holy Trinity, which he makes so inconsistent Profession of with his Mouth?

When we therefore consider the Doctrine of this ever-blessed Trinity as an Article of the Christian Faith, we must consider of it in that Relation to Practice which the Scripture proposes, namely, every Person as conversant about, and co-operating in the Work of our Redemption; God the Father, as having an infinite Compassion and Kindness for lost Mankind, and thereupon sending his Son to restore them; God the Son, as taking human Nature upon him, that, by his Life, he might both instruct us in God's Will, and be an Example of living according to it, and, by his Death, he might make a Propitiation for our Sins; and lastly, God the Holy Ghost,

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Ghost, as sent into the Hearts of Believers, to be a new Principle of a divine Life, to assist all well-disposed Persons with his Grace to the End of the World, in the subduing their Corruptions, and in the Performance of all that Obedience which Christ has required of them, And what can be a greater Foundation for Piety than this Doctrine, which carries with it the strongest Arguments that can possibly be made use of to a reasonable Nature, to oblige and engage us to give up ourselves entirely to the Service of God?

And so, my Christian Brethren, let us all constantly live and end our Days in the Fear, in the Love and Service, in the Worship and Adoration of that all-glorious and blessed Trinity, who has condescended to do so much for us Men, and for our Salvation; for whose Glory we were created, and in whose Names we were baptized; and who therefore should ever be the Subject of our Song, the Thoughts of our obedient Hearts, the Breath and Laud of our joyful Lips. The divine Perfections deserve it, the Benefits conferred upon us require it, and demand the highest Expressions thereof from Creatures as we are, who *live and move, and have our Being*, who owe all that we have, or hope for, to the good Pleasure of that Maker, Preserver, and Dispenser of all Things: But especially, for that unspeakable Love, and inestimable Benefit of our Redemption. It is very meet, right, and our bounden Duty, (as some of us this Day have acknowledged, in the Words of Eucharistical Praise) that we, so redeemed and sanctified, should at all Times give Thanks for that invaluable Blessing; that with Angels and Arch-angels, and all the Company of Heaven, we laud the glorious Name of him that contrived, him that undertook, and

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him that finished it ; that we, in a Word, make it our Study and Joy, and Earnest of our greater Happiness, to thank, and praise, and magnify ; to serve and please ; and, both in our Lips and Lives, and all Things, glorify this great and good Tri-une God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

Therefore we praise, and bless, and ascribe, both in Heart and Voice, to Thee, O Father, begotten of none ; to Thee, O Son, the only begotten of the Father ; to Thee, O Holy Ghost, eternal Comforter ; to Thee, three Persons, but one God, all Glory, Praise, Thanksgiving, Might, Majesty, Dominion, and Obedience, henceforth and for ever.



S E R.



For *May Day*.

S E R M O N

The Twenty-First.

*The Duty of keeping the Festivals of
our Church.*

I COR. v. 8.

Let us keep the Feast.

TAKING these Words in general,
and abstracted from the particular
Feast here meant (which is the Pass-
over) my Design from them may
properly be,

- I. To signify the Piety and Wisdom in keeping
and observing Festival Commemorations in Me-
mory of the Apostles and Saints.
- II. To shew the due Manner how they ought to
be kept by us.

I. It is on all Hands agreed, that solemn Days
of Thanksgiving for extraordinary public Mercies
and Deliverances, when enjoined by supreme Au-
thority of the Nation, are not only lawful to be
observed, but it becomes a Duty and an Act of

Religion to keep them ; and he neither deserves a Share in the Benefit, or the Name of being a Member of the Public, that should object against it : As indeed none can offer any Objection from Conscience in the Case ; and, therefore, no Pretence of refusing Compliance to the Civil Power.

That Thanksgiving is certainly an essential Part of Religion, that is owned by all Sects and Parties ; and that public national Blessings and Favours call for public Acknowledgments, is as little denied.

All the Question then is about the Duty and Expedience of keeping those Festival Days, dedicated annually to particular Saints, which the Church has thought fit to select and appoint, and the Law of the Land to approve of.

That it was not only lawful to enjoin at first the few that were retained when the *Romish* Corruption and Superstition were purged away, but very expedient also, I shall

1. Offer some Reasons to prove it.
2. Consider candidly the Exceptions that are made against it.

For the first, I need not produce any Historical Passages of our first Reformers; there are moral Reasons enough to evince their Prudence in appointing them, and the religious Convenience and Advantage of retaining them still.

I would be understood, not to make the keeping them absolutely necessary, but expedient only to the Furtherance and Increase of our Piety: And sure it was with such good and pious Views our first Reformers reserved some Holy-days, and rejected others which they found in the Church of *Rome*: Why else did they retain any at all? If it was a Duty to observe set Days, because the Church commanded it, why did they lay aside any? But therefore they laid aside and expunged abundance,

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dance, because the Church had exceeded its general Commission, in recommending and enforcing several that tended to Superstition, which enervates true Religion and Piety. But, as they threw Numbers out, so, for the like wise Reason, they kept a few in the Kalendar; rightly judging, they tended manifestly, in the Solemnization, to improve the due Observers of them in the several particular Graces and Virtues, which those respective Saints and Confessors were most eminent and remarkable for, and might also occasionally teach to avoid what Failings or Miscarriages any of them might be most noted for, and that by forbearing what they were guilty of, or else repenting with them; and, by practising and imitating their excellent Examples, in whatever is virtuous, Praiseworthy, and of good Report, they might go on the easier and the safer to Perfection; thanking God for their holy Lives and the pious Conclusion of it at their Deaths; beseeching him to give us Grace so to follow their good Examples, that, with them, we may be Partakers of his heavenly Kingdom.

And herein may be observed the admirable Temper of our Church, in being so sparing, in solemnizing such a few, no more than what was purely edifying, instructive of good Example, or pregnant and indicative of fit Opportunity for recognizing some singular great Mercy of God; neither does she impose them but upon voluntary People, who have Leisure and Convenience to celebrate the Extraordinaries of her Service; and this without any Snare to their Conscience, or Burden, or Disadvantage to their Affairs; as it must be a very great one to the poorer Sort of the *Roman* Communion, in *Roman Catholic* Countries, if they are required to keep their numerous needless Festivals strictly (as in too many Instances they

they are) or else, if they are not dispensed with *gratis*, as I doubt they seldom are, their Business and Affairs indeed, in one Sense, will be Religion, and yet do very little to the saving their Souls.

They may starve themselves and Families while they are on their Knees, and take a Surfeit against Religion, by having so much of that, and so little Conveniences of Life. This needless Inconvenience and Abuse in the extreme, was happily rectified at the Reformation. The Christian Religion was never intended to discourage honest Industry; and our Church and Laws necessary require public Attendance on it but one Day in seven, and now and then a Thanksgiving, or Fast, and invite those who have Time on their Hands to her Congregation on her other Holidays. So that here is no Umbrage to be taken at the Multiplicity of her prescribed Days, nor at her severe Exaction of them.

That the Church has Power, at her Discretion, of appointing Festivals and Commemorations for the Purpose of promoting the Good and Edification of her Members, is evident from the Practice of the *Jewish* Church; which, notwithstanding it had an exact Pattern and Institution, a Number of holy Times and Seasons, from the Legislature of Heaven given from the Mount; yet, without any divine Institution, or positive Direction from thence, she set up the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple of her own Accord, and, no Doubt, required a suitable Observance; else it had been a mere Mockery and Cypher: None of the Prophets ever blamed it, but rather gave general Reasons for keeping it with Temperance and Sobriety. *Wo unto them that rise up early in the Morning, that they may follow strong Drink.* Our Saviour himself (who conformed to every Thing innocent in that Church) seems to have kept

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kept this Feast, by a Passage in one of the Evangelists, Joh. xx. 22, 23, *And it was at Jerusalem the Feast of the Dedication, and it was Winter, and Jesus walked in the Temple, in Solomon's Porch:* Whether he was in the Temple, at the Service, or not, it is certain, when he taxed the Scribes and Pharisees of their Additions to, and Corruption of the Law, he never accused them of this.

So that, by Parity of Reason, the Governors in the Christian Church have undoubted Authority to consecrate and enjoin such Days and Seasons as apparently tend to the Edification of her Members in Piety and Godliness of Living. And, in Virtue of these Powers, she began very early, in all Probability, to dedicate some to the Memory of some great Heroes in the Christian Warfare, and Worthies in the Race, who had signally followed their Master in their Lives, and courageously sustained Ignominy, and Pains, and Death for his Name's Sake. They annually remembered their Death with Festivity and Rejoicing, because that was the whitest and most happy Day to those holy Persons, a Day of joyful Birth to a better Life, which put an End to the Malice and Cruelty of a persecuting, miserable, vain, wicked World, and gave them Entrance into Triumphs over their Enemies, and the Crown and Reward of all their Labours: And this they did in Compliance to that general Command of the Apostle to the Hebrews, Chap. xiii. ver. 7. *Remember them which have the Rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose Faith follow, considering the End of their Conversation.* And it is not altogether without Reason that St. Paul is thought hereby chiefly to hint at the Martyrdom of St. James, the Bishop of Jerusalem (one of the Saints of this Day) who, not long before, had laid down his

his Life for the Testimony of *Jesus*, as * one conjectures.

Yet the Church of *England* (a farther Instance of her Wisdom and Temper) lopt off several of those Saints and Confessors, and confined herself almost wholly to the Commemoration of the Apostles of our Lord, whose Lives and Examples were likely to be most exact and conformable to their and our Blessed Saviour's, because they had the Happiness and Advantage to hear his heavenly Sayings, and mark well his Foot-steps; and indeed excellent Patterns, and Examples in general, are of admirable Direction in the Course of Duty, and give a more operative Encouragement, and a clearer Light, than Precept; for as much as Precepts cannot well descend to every Circumstance of Action, nor define the Expediency or Inexpediency of indifferent Things left to our own Liberty, which may alter very much in Times and Seasons, and leave us in a Doubt which to follow: But when unquestionable Example goes before, and leads the Way, we are no longer at an Uncertainty. In particular, *St. Paul's* Conduct (which he acquaints us with himself) in Compliance to indifferent Matters, is of great Use, and will, by the Bye, bear very hard against those Dissenters from this Church, who have nothing else but indifferent Matters to object.

So that, upon the Whole, the keeping our few and well-chosen Holidays, is no more than embracing so many Occasions of surveying and contemplating the Examples of holy Men and Women, who have been eminent in some Graces and Virtues, and Christian Ornaments, and examining our own Hearts how far they are deficient in them, and by what Steps they may attain the like Growth

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and Perfection: All in general suggest to our Meditation, what Courage in doing, what Patience and Resignation in suffering, what Forgiveness of Injuries, what Contempt of the World, become the Disciples of Jesus; and it is our Fault, and must lie at our Door, having such a Cloud of Patterns and Predecessors, if we do not imitate.

And, besides that Advantage, it affords also frequent revolving Opportunities of seasonably-offering up our Praises and Thanksgivings to God, for his manifold Graces, and Advantages bestowed on his Servants; while we abide in the due Influence and Commemoration of them, we are in the pious Course and Method of keeping up the *Communion of Saints*, which we professedly believe in. Let us now, in the 2d Place, hear the Exceptions to this laudable good Practice. A few Words will dispatch them, because a few are made, and those of very feeble and mistaken Strength.

And first, if it is objected, "That the celebrating particular Festivals restrains the Praises of God to set Times, which ought to be extended to all Times, indefinitely:"

We do not say, That praising God upon a set Day shall exclude praising him upon another; but, as we are too apt to forget, it is convenient to refresh our Memories, and ascertain some set Day, or Days; lest, if left to ourselves, we put it off from Day to Day: And there is great Danger of not doing it at all; if a Time and Season is not fixed and prescribed. They are therefore wisely set to our Hands, and we have Company to perform the Duty with, which makes it more acceptable to God; and as oft as they recur, like Monuments, to our Sight, are so many Memorandums of what we ought to do.

But

But, say they, 2dly, "Is the Observation of these Days commanded in Scripture?"

To which I answer, Neither are they prohibited: And in that Case, the Church (as was shown before) has Authority to prescribe in Things that minister most to Edification.

But, "Is not the *Observer of Times* condemned by God in the * *Old Testament*; and the *Galatians* † blamed by *St Paul*, for observing *Days, and Months, and Times*?"

Yes; but another Sort of Times quite: For those spoken of in *Deut. xviii. 10.* as you may judge by the Company they are mentioned with of Enchanters and Wizards, were the idolatrous Times of the Heathens, their superstitious Distinction of Lucky and Unlucky Days; and those in the New Testament regard only the *Jewish Festivals*, which some Judaizing *Galatians* strictly kept, notwithstanding they were declared to be all dissolved, and of no farther Obligation, and to put not only a Yoke on their Christian Liberty, but endangering their Relapse to their old Religion again.

But, "Does not, lastly, the Abuse plead hard against them?"

Not at all, That may as justly be pleaded against the best Things, the Lord's Day itself, because that has been profaned; against Eating and Drinking, and Cloathing, because one has oft been abused to Intemperance, and the other to Pride and Vanity.

So that, you see, there is not one substantial Objection to deter, but many spiritual Advantages to invite us to assemble ourselves, as we do now, - on these Days, and to answer the End of the pious Institutors of these Festivals.

* *Deut. xviii. 10.*

† *Gal. iv. 10, 11.*

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One Means, to be sure, is, that we keep and observe them in a due Manner: Which is the

II^d Thing I propos'd from the Text. And, undoubtedly, the properest Manner is both to attend the Worship of the Church, as all that have Leisure regularly should do, and there give especial Attention to the selected Portions of Scripture, and join in the peculiar Devotion; and likewise there and at Home adore the Divine Power in establishing so firmly his Church, notwithstanding the Rage and Opposition of its Adversaries round about, and making it flourish most by those Methods and Destructions which were likeliest to effect its Ruin, the barbarous Slaughter of its first Professors; to bless his Goodness in communicating such Strength, Consolation, and Alacrity to his dying Martyrs; to mark out the Humility, Charity, Meekness, Patience, or any other Virtue, or good Deed, they were remarkable for, and transcribe it into our own Lives, and strive to emulate them in all that is good and commendable; or, by taking Cognizance of any Blemish they were subject to (for they were Men of Infirmities and Passions as well as we) and be as careful to avoid it, and confess our Dependance more upon, and more earnestly supplicate the Divine Assistance.

To instance from this very Festival, there is as well something, yea much to be imitated, as something to be shunned, in the Gospel History of the two Saints of this Day.

And, First, in the Life of *St. Philip*, we have to imitate a signal Virtue that is intimated of him, *John i. 45.* admirably becoming an Apostle of our Lord, but a Duty likewise incumbent upon all his Disciples; I mean, a large Disposition of Heart, tender and regardful of the Increase of Knowledge in others, as well as ourselves. When

one

one has found out any important, concerning Truth, that leads to Happiness, and is convinced of the Certainty of it upon serious, full Examination, to be ready to divulge, and gladly communicate it to others, and convince them of it: So did *Philip*, when he was satisfied himself of the true Messiah, run with the joyful News to *Nathaniel*, that he had found him of whom *Moses* and the Prophets did write, and would not, (as we may suppose) let him alone, till he prevailed with that sincere *Israelite* to go along with him to see him: So ought we all, (especially the Guides and Ministers are in Office bound) when we have had the Advantage to be instructed rightly in those Truths that facilitate and direct the Way and Means to Salvation, to be forward and inclined upon all fit Occasions to instruct the Ignorant in them: He that deals so charitably by his Neighbour, in Spirituals, has this Reward, if no other, to encourage him, the inward Consolation of being most useful and beneficial to those who are unreasonably unkind to him; and he who has Authority, by being a Parent or Master, or other Superiority of so doing, and neglects it, neglects a Duty which he will one Day answer for.

But there is also a Fault, which is remarked of this Apostle in two or three Places of the same Evangelist, and which we shall do well to take Caution against, especially because we are very inclinable to commit it of ourselves, without any Precedent; that is, in *John* vi. 5. where *Philip* seemed to shew a Sort of Doubt of our Saviour's Power to feed the Multitude, notwithstanding he had seen Miracles before wrought by him; and in *Ch. xiv. ver. 8, 9.* we find him but a very slow, tardy Proficient, considering the extraordinary Means he had to improve by. Our meek Saviour seems to chide him sharply for it; *Have I been*

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been so long Time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? We are too apt (God knows) to follow him in that false Step; but we must never shelter ourselves by an Example in any thing that is wrong, but compare it to the Rule, and follow no farther than it keeps to that: The faulting of another should rather teach us to prepare and dispose our Hearts before-hand for the Reception of Heavenly Truths, and to take more Heed, and quicken our own Progress; and that it is not the only Instance, among the Apostles, that there is no absolute, perfect Example but Christ alone.

Pass we on to *James*, the other Saint and Apostle of this Day, the same that was Brother of our Lord, and Bishop of *Jerusalem*, the Mother Church of all, stiled *James the Less*, but emphatically *James the Just*. There are many Observables in his Life, which I have not Time to be particular upon. He presided in the first Council held by the Apostles at *Jerusalem*, where, in Bar and Confutation of *St. Peter's* pretended Prerogative, he gave the decretory Sentence. His Humility is remarkable, in stiling himself, Ch. i. ver. 1. of his Epistle, *the Servant of the Lord*, though he was nearly related to him in Blood; which instructs us that Birth gives no Privilege or Preheminence in the Kingdom of Heaven: He is called the *Just*, taking that Word in the large Acceptation of it, as comprehending the Practice of Justice, Piety, Temperance, and all Goodness; he is said to be very abstemious in his Diet, and a mortified Man in all Acts of Self-denial, very frequent and fervent in his Devotions, and, for his excellent Virtues, to be revered and honoured by his very Enemies, who soon repented them of their Rashness against him, and imputed, but falsely, (it was for a greater Murder)

Murder) their tragical After-Misfortune to the Guilt of his Blood, though he took Care to prevent it by his dying Prayers, as the Historians relate of him.

May we from hence learn Piety towards God, strict Sobriety towards ourselves, Charity to our Enemies, and so to excel in every good Word and Work, as to gain the good Opinion of all.

And may we have both these holy Men so in our Thoughts, as to be influenced by their Conduct, to prefer the Things of Religion before any Relations or Possessions of this World; and be ready when called, upon Occasion, to relinquish and offer them up to the Cause of Christ.

And may we render Praise and Thanksgiving to God for the holy Lives, and illustrious Deaths of both these Martyrs.

And may we, lastly, take Occasion from this Day (walk we out of Doors, the very Fields will preach to us, the joyful Birds will tell us) to celebrate the Bounty of our God, who has appointed the Summer and Winter, and all the Seasons their set Returns, which they regularly keep. Whilst we enjoy, let us not overlook, at this Time, the Temperature that fills the Air, the lovely Verdure that covers the Earth, the Grass sprouting to be Food for the Kine, the little Lambs skipping for Joy. 'See the Meadows painted with Glories finer than *Solomon's*, the Gardens both adorned and perfumed with Variety of Flowers, rivalling one another in Bloom and Beauty, multiplying themselves, and sporting in innumerable Sorts, variegated and different, yet the same! View the Seeds of all Sorts, by kind, genial Heat, expanding out of Earth to blade, for the present, or future Service of Men! Look on the Plants, old or young, putting on their best Array, to entertain our Sight too, and
give

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give Shade e'er long, or Protection to the infant Fruit! Let any take a Walk, and view these and many other instructive Charms; and, if he can, let him forbear to cry out, *O Lord, how manifold are thy Works! in Wisdom hast thou made them all; the Earth is full of thy Goodness.*

And do we see all Nature round us in Spring and Blossom, and shall we be the only dead unfruitful Things, that spring not forth to the Growth that is appointed us in Grace and Virtue? Does every, the meanest Thing in the Creation fulfil God's Command, and can we Men of Reason bear the Reproach of being the only ungrateful, insensible Inhabitants of this Earth, that presume to be disobedient? Shall the Vine upon our Walls sprout out, and shall we not cultivate the Vine that came down from Heaven? Does the Earth regularly conceive its Seeds and Fruits, and make grateful Returns for the Labour bestowed on it; and we be the only Things barren in it, when the Dews of Heavenly Grace are more ready, and without Interruption, to descend on our Endeavours, than those of the material Heavens to fructify the teeming Earth?

In a Word, let not Inanimate Creatures, for Shame, upbraid us Rational for Non-Improvement under efficacious Means. If not our Reason, let our Interest, at least, teach us more Gratitude and Duty. Seeing the Foundations of our Riches, our Corn and Oil, either sowing, sprouting, or blooming; and considering that their Increase depends upon that God who sends the Rain and Weather, in what Measure he pleases, we must be Fools to go about to do such Things as displease him, and provoke him against us by our Lives and Conversations, Ingratitude, or Sin. If Rain has been already immoderate, believe it, our Sins and Vices have provoked and

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deserved it ; and it may be worse yet, if we do not grow better ; which I hope your temporal Interest and Advantage will prevail upon you to do, if I cannot.

Now to the one eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honour, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion !

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